

O.U.'s Foreign Students Offer Appraisal of U.S.

Representing wide geographic cross-section, nine students give their views about the University and the nation.

By PERRY ROBINSON, '57

Across our brawling, lusty giant of a country, Americans have been taught that this is the greatest country in the world. This belief is accepted as a sacred truism, an axiom from which our nationalism necessarily stems. But what does the rest of the world think of Americans and their country?

Private interviews with nine foreign students enrolled at O.U. gave definite answers on many facets of our country and our civilization. Their opinions, given in the comfortable atmosphere of their rooms, may well be studied with care. The world shrinks with each new innovation of science and many of these persons from far-off lands are but a few hours flying time from your front yard.

Our cast is colorful and varied, studded with geniuses, royalty and adventurers. However, let us meet them along the way. The question, "How do you like Americans and their country?" provoked complimentary answers from each. Peter Duncan, All-American swimmer, gave the strongest praise. He said, "This is the greatest country in the world. I like it better than any other countries I've visited. The thing I like most about Americans is their friendliness." And so it went, right down the line, from Lufty Diab from Lebanon to Effie Papaconstantinou from Greece.

Alexander Hertzberg, a native of Tel Aviv, Israel, said, "American students are very social, have good manners and are 'just good guys.' I learned about America from those Texans who I worked with in the oilfields in Israel. Clyde Ragsdale, my driller, is sending me to school and he and the rest of those crazy Texans taught me plenty."

The other seven seconded these statements and little Ted Shimizu, journalism student from Tokyo, even had a kind word for the professors, "In Japanese colleges you say 'sir' all the time; here me and the profs are buddy-buddy."

Probably more important were the careful criticisms that the far-flung panel had to offer, for they see our country with an unbiased objectiveness while we are hampered by a natural veil of prejudice. The most interesting and perhaps most

surprising of their remarks were directed at American educational standards.

Every student agreed the educational standards of American high schools and universities were lower than those of his home country. Lufty Diab, a graduate psychology student from Lebanon, made the most penetrating analysis.

Diab, who obtained his first degree at the American University of Beirut, had this to say: "You have diluted the content of your curriculum. Americans are very practical, so they have badminton, swimming, et cetera, and not enough math, physics and language. I like this idea of liberal education except for those who are not mentally capable, and they should have trade schooling."

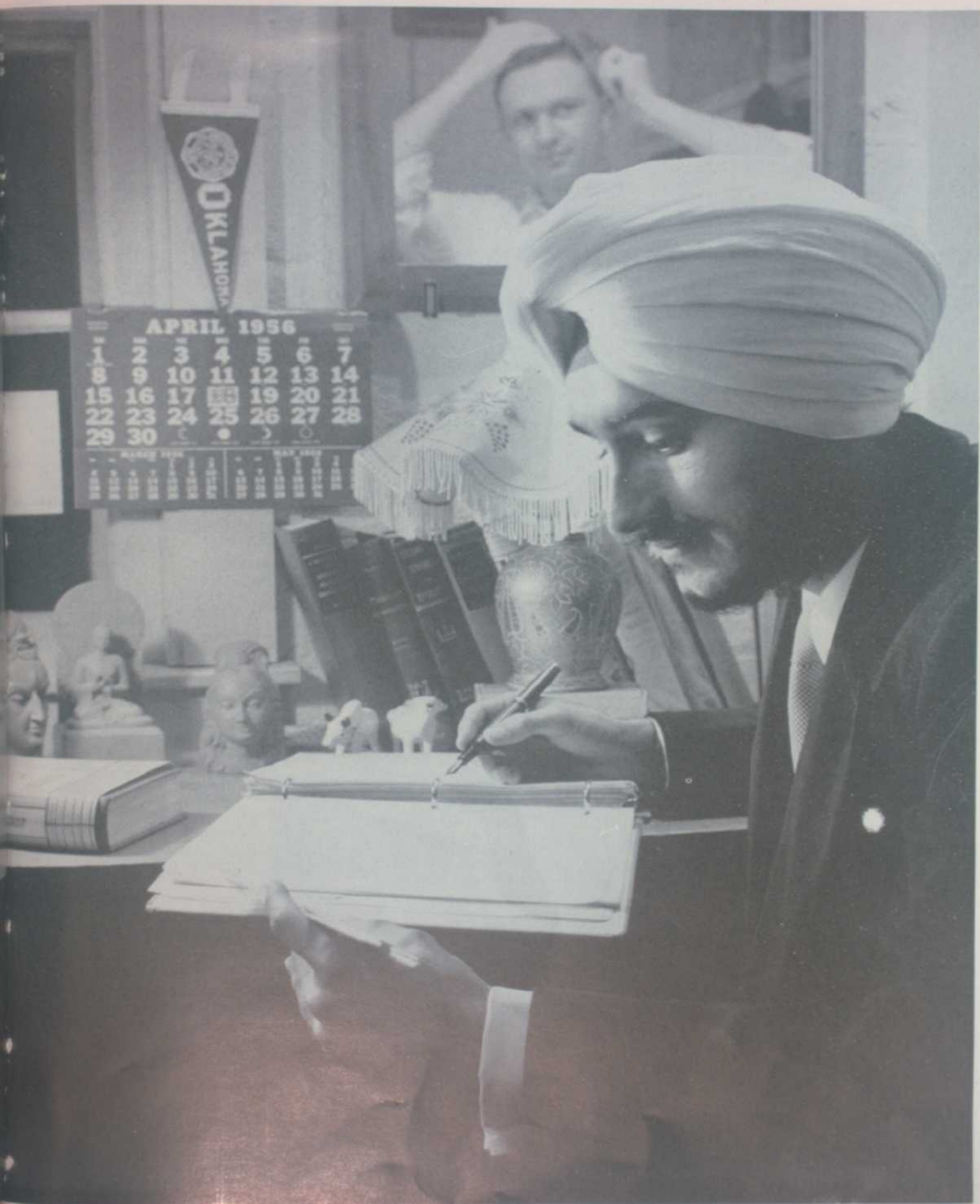
Diab, who is president of the O.U. Arab Club and a graduate teaching assistant, and who will return to Beirut this June to teach at the university, likes the parent-teacher relationship in the United States. "Here, there is more warmth between the teacher and pupil in the undergraduate level. A friendly atmosphere."

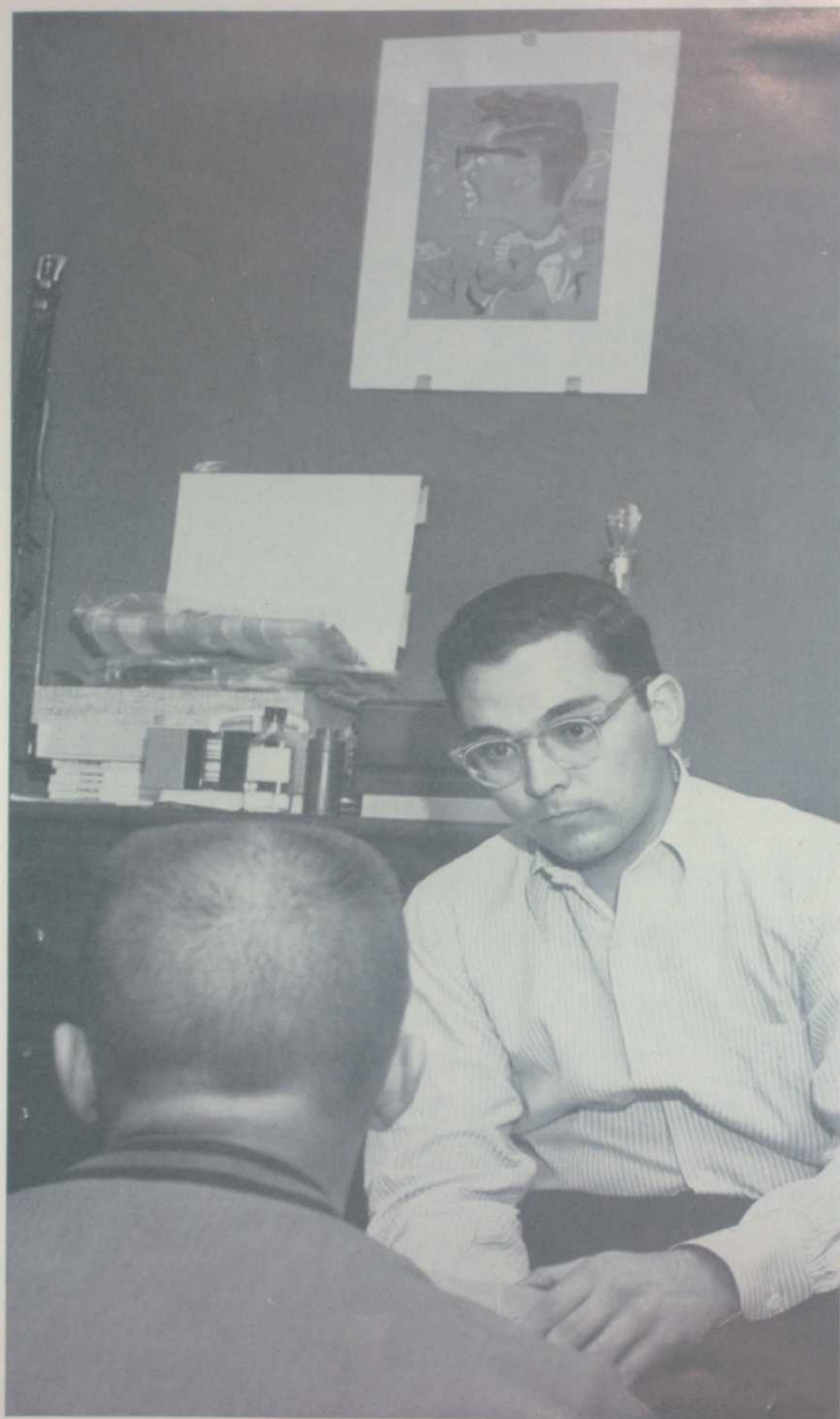
Sharanjit Dhillonn, a Punjab Chief from Karnal, India, is one of the most colorful and interesting persons on the O.U. campus. His turbaned head contrasts vividly with the maze of crewcuts on the campus, and his penetrating gaze and aristocratic mien are equally distinctive. Dhillonn, who graduated from the University of Delhi and is majoring in petroleum engineering here, commented on tests. "We don't have as many tests at the University of Delhi. There, we had tests only at the end of the semester and at the end of the year, like finals. I prefer the method of more tests but they carry it too far." He shook his head sadly, "Students start preparing for the test only, rather than studying to learn."

Manuel Chacin, a personable young man from Venezuela, likes the schools in America. He has two brothers in Southern Methodist University and one sister in Cushing High School, and he

Sharanjit Dhillonn, O.U.'s only Punjab chief, consults his slide rule while his roommate concentrates on preparation for an evening movie.







Personable Manuel Chacin, from San Tome, Venezuela, shown here during his *Sooner Magazine* interview, is vice president of the Pi Kappa Alpha social fraternity.

What are their chief problems?
Food . . . English . . . and Behavior.

himself spent two years of highschool at Texas Military in San Antonio. Effie Papaconstantinou, a pretty girl from Athens, Greece, who was teaching English at 18, found most of her difficulty with American education in the professors' inability to pronounce her name.

Frederich Zeeven, tall, well-mannered son of a Groningen, Holland, realtor, was the most enthusiastic about America. Although he agreed the schools in Holland were harder, he likes O.U. better. "I've been perfectly happy ever since I came." Zeeven, whose room and board is furnished by Delta Tau Delta fraternity, said, "The first minute I entered the Delt House I had 40 friends. Everyone has given me tremendous help. I like the freedom American students have, in school and with their own lives."

Gultekin Yuksel, a 24-year-old engineering student from Ankara, Turkey, came to O.U. three years ago after two semesters at the Technical University of Istanbul.

Yuksel, a slight, soft-spoken fellow, is a prime example of the educational backgrounds that O.U. foreign students have. He has accumulated 106 credit hours at O.U., 98 of which were A, 8 of the B variety, and one hour of C.

The chief problems of the nine were surprising. Only one, Alexander Hertzberg, listed language as his main obstacle to adjustment. Alex, who joined the Israeli underground at 14, was wounded at 15 and discharged, finds it hard to *think* in English. "It takes me from 11 to 12 hours for every theme. First I write it in Hebrew, then translate it to English, looking up all the words in the dictionary." Whatever difficulty he encounters, Hertzberg is decidedly poly-lingual, for he speaks seven languages.

Dhillonn, the Punjab Chief, remarked, "My main problem continues to be food. I've tried to replace my distaste for the food by drinking more milk, but it didn't work. I lost eight pounds." Effie, who came here from Greece only last January, said, "My main problem is to understand the type of thinking and behavior of the people here. They say one thing and mean another. I do not know what they mean. I feel rather self-conscious because many times I act differently than they expect."

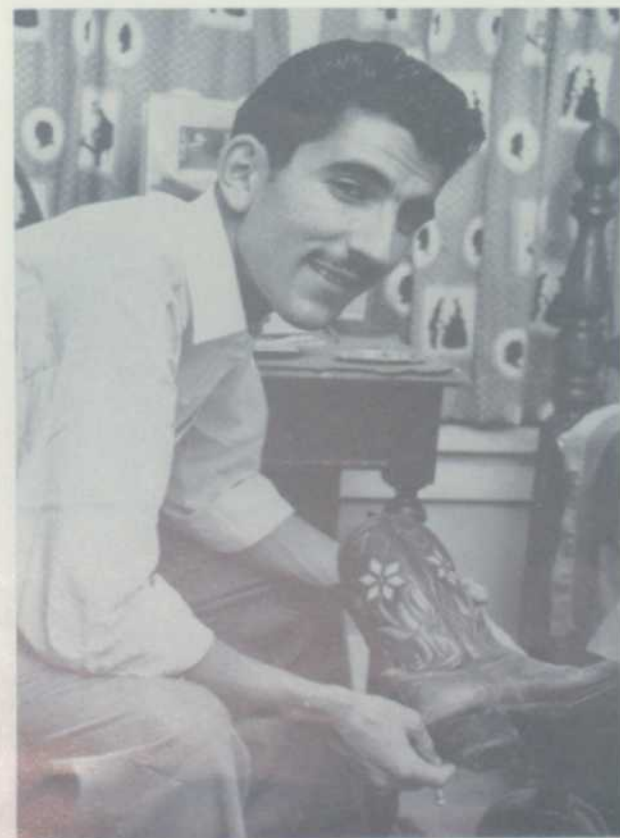
Peter Duncan, the swimmer, is a handsome, intelligent young man. His clothes and general appearance blend perfectly with O.U.'s young men. Only by a trace of



Peter Duncan, All-American swimmer from Pretoria, South Africa, pauses a moment to comb his hair after a strenuous pre-lunch workout in the University pool. He swam in the '52 Olympics.



Effie Papaconstantinou of Athens, Greece, was teaching English in a Red Cross hospital at age of 19.



Lufty Diab, a psychology graduate from Merjayoun, Lebanon, displays cowboy boots his Texas uncle gave him last year. Diab is now president of O.U.'s Arab Club.



Bultemin Yuksel, of Ankara, Turkey, who was sent to O.U. by the Turkish Mining Institute, has 98 hours of A out of a total of 106 while at O.U.

Little Ted Shimizu from Tokyo is being sent to school by Earnest Hoberecht, vice president of the United Press Asiatic Bureau, to study journalism. Ted's only dislike, "Too many tests."



British accent is one able to realize that he is not a native American. More than any of the nine, with the possible exception of Chacin, Duncan has experienced the different segments of American society.

He is engaged to an Oklahoma City girl, belongs to a social fraternity, and is well-acquainted among the athletes. "My biggest disappointment in this country has been the falsified city society. Some of those people hang around the country clubs, and just because they discovered a uranium mine and are rich, they think they are better than someone else," Duncan said. "Another thing I've noticed. You never get to rest here. People are always in a hurry, after the dollar all the time."

As Duncan talked, one could feel the serious intensity of his voice. He wanted it made clear that he thought the United States was the greatest country in the world, but like anyone, he was disappointed at the flaws in its greatness. He commented on the extremely low-income bracket, or in other words, the drunks, the bums and similar unfortunates.

"In South Africa, we don't have nearly so many of that type. They are subsidized by the government. It is, of course, a form of socialism. Our country isn't large enough to have the free enterprise system as you have here. We just don't have bums, or rather I would say we have one-tenth the amount of that type people in Pretoria that they have in the cities I've visited here."

Yuksel, the Turk, is a brilliant young man. He changes easily from discussing the intuitive reasoning of Descartes to engineering problems. Rather than trying to adjust to Americans and their customs, he has isolated himself. He has his reasons. "When a foreign student has habits formed, there is no special push behind him to make him change. I came too old (24). I had the choice of changing or isolating myself, and since I'm too busy to miss the social things, I chose the latter. I am here to learn, so I don't worry about changing."

Yuksel's biggest surprise in the United States was the absence of the Hollywood conception he had formed in his mind from American movies. "After I found out people had to work and that the United States had its problems just like any other country, I liked it better."

Dhillonn and Diab were both disappointed in American students' lack of interest in international affairs. However, Diab agreed that one of the main factors in determining a citizen's interest in international happenings is the bearing it has on himself, the individual, and that since the United States has a very stable government and is one of

the most powerful countries in the world, its citizens do not worry about such matters as do the inhabitants of tiny Lebanon and strife-ridden India.

But Diab, who remembers the Arab tent cities erected after the exodus from Jerusalem, thinks that it is the American citizen's moral responsibility to be better informed because the United States is the recognized leader of the west. This was an honest appraisal, and as Diab continued one felt the overwhelming amount of trust that these people from the rest of the free world place in the United States.

Fred Zeeven, whose only possession that marked him as being from Holland was a pair of tiny wooden shoes, had no criticism for Americans or the University. He is tall and has reddish hair and talks rather fast. He likes the churches here. "The churches here have more to offer, such as organizations, activities, Sunday school classes. They discuss important problems that have a bearing on one's personal life. The religions and churches do something for the people here, and seem to make quite an effort to get people to come."

Zeeven approved the O.U. students' freedom of social contact and he was seconded by almost every one in the group. Dhillonn, his darkly-handsome face humorous under his turban, remarked, "The girls don't leave much to the imagination." One could imagine his outlook after the veils and mystery of India. Another interesting fact was the unanimity of response about the morality of America in comparison with each of the foreign students' home country.

Although customs, and religions differ, all nine observed little difference in the moral standards of Americans and the inhabitants of their homeland. Yuksel, Zeeven, Diab, and Chacin described the difference in social conduct, Zeeven in great detail.

Chacin, the Venezuelan, had a different outlook on the American's haste and constant struggle in everyday living than did Duncan, the South African. Whereas Duncan was perturbed by the American's seemingly endless search for the almighty dollar philosophy, Chacin said, "Everyone is in a hurry. But actually, if they weren't working at such a pace, America wouldn't be the great country that it is. The industry of the people is remarkable."

The nine students represented a far-flung poll of opinion. The turbaned Indian chief, the pretty Greek girl, the impassive Turk, all spoke freely, a tribute to the American way of life. They had complete confidence that their remarks would be received in good faith. At times one would have trou-

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"Americans are freer in their every movement," said Fred Zeeven, Groningen, The Netherlands. "Students here are freer, more mature because of an earlier responsibility with themselves."



Alexander Hertzberg of Tel Aviv, Israel, paints a vivid picture of the turbulent high school life he experienced in the Middle East. He was a guerilla at 14, wounded and discharged at 15.

and academic fields is a colorful whirl of social activity—from elaborate, formal affairs to “blue jean” parties western style.

An airy notion exists among a sizeable portion of our student body that the class schedule should be arranged to create no conflict with the current semester’s social calendar and that studying is something to be done at odd moments between telephone calls.

Can we assume that parties lower scholarship? We might equally well prove the reverse; low marks may drive students to the intoxicating gaiety of a party for blessed relief!

True, that in many cases the “sociable type” does not want to be known as a grind. C minus is good enough for him. Then, there is the very intense, almost too scrupulous worker, a slave to his grade point, who will settle for nothing less than an A in every course. Surely this, too, is a sterile, narrowing pursuit.

O.U. is a “party” school but it is also a “study” school. The constant problem of combining worthwhile social experiences with sincere scholastic endeavor faces every student on our campus. The compromise is not easy to make.

By BEV BLACKWOOD
Engineering Senior

WHAT IS a party school? If a party school is a school which has parties, yes, O.U. is a party school. If a party school is one which has adequate social functions for every student, then O.U. is a party school. If a party school denotes one which has excessive social functions, O.U. probably is still a party school. If a party school is marked for the wildness of its parties and the cubic feet per second of alcohol which flows, O.U. is probably outdistanced by many, if not most, of its competitors; but it might still be called a “party school.” The former is good, the latter, not so hot!

A vitally important thing for every college student to realize is that a degree is not an education. A 3.9 grade average is not understanding. Sure, it is an important part, but not at all conclusive in itself. College days (or college daze to the less purposeful youth) are vital days of trial by fire, away from the guiding hands of parents. Many pass the sound barrier in grades and crack up on the acid test of compatibility with God and man.

A fundamental part of education is the ability to socialize . . . to get along with your fellow man. O.U.’s many organizations furnish ample if not abundant opportunity for all to learn the American way of living and working together. Fraternities and sororities by no means provide the

most important social activities. Religious groups and other non-Greek organizations furnish social outlets for those not inclined toward Greek activities. So, in one way or another, rarely anybody on our campus is without ample opportunity for growing socially.

I honestly believe our campus operates at near optimum efficiency for social growth. The opportunity is adequate for all who don’t play the extremes of isolationism or moral disintegration which leads to the “wildness” often attributed to “party schools.” Let’s face it . . . “Parties make the world go ‘round,” . . . to quote an ancient Tasmanian llama herder.

By DON RESLER
Pharmacy Senior

I PERSONALLY do not believe that O.U. can be fully classed as a party school. A person must realize that wherever you go to school you will meet all types of people, and with these will be a certain percentage that party more than the average student. Sure, we definitely have our full share here at the University; so does Oklahoma A&M and the other state schools.

One of the big reasons O.U. has this reputation is that people have the conception that all O.U. students are very wealthy. People throughout my part of the state will remark that at O.U. you socially do not have a chance, while at A&M all you need is a pair of boots and some jeans and you are on top of the social world.

The amount of partying a student is able to do depends a great deal upon his course of study. Some schools are simply not as difficult as others. For instance, in the Pharmacy School when a student comes to class in the morning with bloodshot eyes, it is not because of the party he has had the night before. The parties are there for those who have the time, but so is the opportunity for a good education from the state university.

By LLOYD BETTIS
Education Senior

PERHAPS I should preface my remarks on this subject by admitting that I grew up within thirty miles (as the horse gallops) of the “Cowboy College” at Stillwater.

Therefore, I was given a liberal spoon-feeding of propaganda concerning O.U. For that reason, some of my observations concerning our school may be somewhat orange-and-black tinted.

When my friends learned that I was really going to the “snob factory,” as they put it, they asked in horror if I knew a suit was a must in all classes.

During my freshman year, I looked at the bleary faces about me in the eight o’clock classes, read that six of the men’s houses had “D” averages, and was almost convinced O.U. was a party school.

On the other hand, the fact that last semester 126 students made straight A’s proves that not all of the students on the campus go partying every night. Also, the large number of married students and ex-G.I.’s have had a stabilizing influence on the rest of the student body. It seems that more of the students know that college is an investment in life and is a thing to be taken more seriously than they did ten or more years ago. When a person spends his own money on education, he usually works hard to get his share of the learning that is being passed out.

Since I am married and have three children, the social life at O.U. is not of much concern to me. To me, O.U. is not a party school; rather, a place where I have worked hard, learned some things, (blue jeans are allowed in classrooms, for instance), and have benefitted in meeting many people with backgrounds and ideas that are different from mine.

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ble expressing the emotion he felt in words, but at other occasions a question would open a flood-gate of feeling that sent the writer scrambling for paper and pen, unable to record the torrent of opinion.

Several conclusions could be reached. First, foreign students like the United States and its people, particularly after they are here for a reasonable length of time. Secondly, these people from Lebanon, and India, and Japan, and all the rest, expect world leadership from the United States. They are no longer the pictures on the travel folder or the characters in historical novels. They are literally neighbors and their welfare is important to us.

The interest in Americans and the trust they place in the leadership of the United States is a heartwarming thing. Many miles from all that is home, they face life here with remarkable optimism and courage. One could sense their desire, and some voiced it, for American people who travel abroad to exercise a deeper insight into the culture and minds of foreign people rather than trundling heavily through the country in true tourist fashion.

People of other nations are interested in us and we must be interested in them; they represent the stability of our future.