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Under Cover

By DAVID BURR, '52ba

NOW AND THEN I become weary of the magazine office with its wild array of correspondence, ash trays, typewriters and half-finished articles. A detachment, dangerous to productivity, takes over. Wits are dulled and ambition blunted.

Editing an alumni magazine is a lonely business. There are few formal rules that can be followed to guarantee a good magazine. Decisions are made arbitrarily. This picture stays in. That story is chopped. As you work, it becomes apparent that an excellent magazine may be destroyed through the administration of editorial judgment.

The editor has few contacts with his readers beyond the printed page. He must make his monthly contact count. And the questions keep coming back: Is something of value being offered? Is something included that will interest each reader? This kind of mental meandering can lead to a vacuum in mind and magazine.

And the vacuum can be filled only by regaining lost perspective. One way that is always open to perspective seekers is a walk across the campus. Come along. I think you'll see what I mean.

We're now outside the practice rooms of Holmberg Hall. Voices and strings, from separate rooms, join when windows are open in an unusual symphony. Peculiarly formless, strangely compounded, the sound might pass for modern music.

Move on to the Drama School. From behind closed doors comes a voice repeating, with feeling, that all the world's a stage. You are grateful for the truism but not enough to interrupt the intense young man who cast it in your direction.

Glance in the classroom where a hundred students are hearing a lecture on fundamentals of chemistry or in the laboratory where youthful faces reflect the mystery of mixing this with this to form this. Intense, mostly. But here is a student who has no interest. The mystery has been resolved. He is not confused. He believes that animation will fool the teacher into believing that some mental gymnastics are taking place.

Down the hall there is the Dean's office. Students with academic difficulties sit next to the campus leader who wants to invite the Dean to a social function. Watch the Dean at work. Basically sympathetic to student problems, he knows that some who will see him during the day are con men at heart. They will want something for nothing. Others, struggling for an academic toe hold, want assurance that there is a chance for them. Only a few, well-adjusted students will be by to see him and he must battle to keep his

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perspective from twisting into uselessness.

And for a final stop, look into the Union Cafeteria. This is the Grand Central Station of College life. All streets lead to the cafeteria.

There's a student group that just had a quiz. Only students who have taken a test can convey doubt, regret, relief and bitterness at the same time. A few are bitter with the teacher—"How many problems did he take from footnotes today?" A few are bitter with themselves—"I knew I should have studied over the holidays." All are dissatisfied, as only students can be, except the student who knows he's done well. And he must pretend that he flunked, also, if he is to be included in the conversation.

There's a group of faculty members. One is remarking that he has an entire class that can't comprehend the subject matter. Another is pleased by the performance of a brilliant student. But many are not discussing class work at all. They're relaxing. Discussing the morning news. Trying to evaluate world happenings in terms of their own specialties. Offering excellent conversation and a valuable educational experience to any who wish to listen.

The cafeteria is the campus melting pot. Faculty members and students talk in an informal atmosphere; the climate is conducive to understanding. President Cross drops by. Sees a table of students or faculty members. Joins them. He learns more in a few minutes over coffee about campus attitudes than he can in several hours of office interviews.

And then move out of the cafeteria. Go back to typewriter and desk and office. Consider the sights and sounds assembled on the campus walk.

Personal perspective returns. And with it, the answer to an even larger question: Why do people—administrators, students and faculty—seek to be a part of campus life?

It is difficult to remain at a great university without feeling its enthusiasm and strength. Where else in all the world can you see so many youngsters striving to develop their talents and their minds? Where teachers delight in exploring for more knowledge and leading young minds through the jungle already perceived.

You want to be a part of such a university's hopes and dreams. To add to its enthusiasm for progress. To lend it the strength you have. To have a purpose and a part.