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... as a dean sees him

COMPARING today's students with those of yesteryear is a risky business, and I know it. Generalizations always invite criticism from those who know of exceptions—and almost everyone does. In addition, there is always the possibility that the students are the same and it is only I who have changed. Nevertheless, this gives me an opportunity to reflect on the human race in general, and no one in his right mind would pass up an opportunity to do that!

As far as we can tell, the I.Q. of students entering college today is no different than it was a hundred years ago. The genetics of the human race has not changed enough in this area to be measurable. The environmental influences have changed, however, and that is what has caused the difference in today's students.

In some ways students know a lot more than they did a few years ago. Radio and television have increased their awareness in some ways but have undoubtedly contributed to many of their shortcomings in other ways. I don't think students have read nearly as much by the time they reach college age as they once did. Getting a college degree is still primarily a reading function, and with less reading experience many students find college class assignments almost more than they can bear. If this observation is true, it very probably can be blamed in part on the excessive time spent in front of a television screen during the years when reading habits are becoming established.

(Parents please note: There are more T.V. sets in homes than in schools, and those in schools are used for quite different purposes. So before firing the principal because "Johnny can't read," you might ponder how long the T.V. set stays on at your house.)

These same T.V. sets, however, have made available all kinds of information and experiences which are quite educational to today's students, and I think this is reflected also. A good example in the governmental area is obvious to everyone. How many of yesterday's children had seen a president sworn into office, or a press conference? Most of today's children have. Science, of course, has come alive in the minds of many students because of what they see on television.

Because of the great social demands that are put upon today's young people to get a college degree, many are forced to come to college although they have neither the desire nor the ability to get a college education. Both these ingredients are necessary. I feel terribly sorry for young people in this

"a few still dare to be different"

category. They are caught in one enormous tide, and there is not much left for them to do but to get at least their bodies on the campus. Where their minds are, only their Maker knows!

Sometimes, in desperation to get attention or at least to excel in something, they do some mighty peculiar things. Just reading about them in the paper without any background information must make the adult population of this land wonder, "What's the country coming to?" During the depression days, for example, only those with great desire made the effort to come to college. Very few were being forced, and very few did those unbelievably "crazy" acts we read about today.

Many of today's students would like to have a college education but without any effort on their part. "Surely," they seem to say, "there must be some way for me to get this degree through some act of a benevolent government, a kindly teacher or rich parents or Heaven knows what else." Learning has not changed much over the years. It just isn't easy. Punch-button living has changed our lives in hundreds of ways, and to some degree has changed our schools. The fact still remains, however, that one must do his own learning.

The "something for nothing" idea, fairly common among our adult population, is being reflected in our young people. Although this philosophy runs headlong into trouble when it comes to learning, it doesn't necessarily present the same difficulty when it comes to getting college degrees. The schools with the most students get the most money, offering a great temptation to institutions of higher learning to encourage large enrolment by "letting down the bars" on standards. No educated person needs to have pointed out to him what the ultimate end of our nation would be if we continued along this line, instead of finding ways to reward excellence.

STUDENTS have always been conservative about changing rules which have to do with them, although they may have radical ideas concerning rules which govern other people. If even a suggestion appears in the student paper that the Regents are considering changing some student regulation, there might well be a crowd on the lawn of the President's home that night. Years ago I saw them walk out of classes over the "no car" rule, and more recently have heard them in the night chanting their complaints about the possibility of changing rush week. They are no different from adults in this respect—all of us love the status quo concerning ourselves but clearly see the need for changes elsewhere.

Finally, it seems to me, students these days reflect the same physical laziness that adults have in such a large measure. Just as merchants have found that they must provide parking for their customers if they expect any business at all, so have colleges responded to this same pressure. As a matter of fact, it starts in the high school. Most new high schools provide enormous parking lots. I expect some of them have spent more on parking lots than they have on libraries and no doubt will continue spending more money in maintaining these lots. On the editorial page of the December 14 issue of one of Oklahoma's junior college newspapers appeared three headlines in this order: "Christmas Is Our Heritage," "Christ Is Our Example," and "Parking Is Our Problem."

RECENTLY I had a student complain to me that his grades were poor because his dormitory room was too noisy. I suggested since it was only three or four blocks to the library that he go there to study. When he said it took too long, I just couldn't understand why. He explained that it took too long to find a parking place for his car. If you think all of this is just too fantastic to believe, ask the man who owns a store in a downtown area and also one out where there is plenty of parking. I keep thinking the principle of the drive-in bank can somehow be applied to the college classroom, but as yet I haven't come up with anything practical.

I guess what I have tried to say is that the attitudes of students are pretty much the same as the attitudes of those of us who are adults. As a nation gets lazy, so does its children. Perhaps our real hope lies not with those who follow the crowd, but with the few who dare to be different. Fortunately universities still have a distinct minority among students who just insist on doing the job better than the rest. They come from the small towns and humble homes, from large schools and wealthy homes. It doesn't seem to make so much difference what their physical environments have been but more the attitude of those adults who have guided their steps through the formative years of their lives. If the parents believe it is possible to live on society as a parasite, the offspring is likely to think so too. If the parents cheat on the rules of the game (speed laws, income tax, moral laws), the chances are pretty good that their children will follow the example. Sure, I think students are different today than they used to be—and so are the adults who created the environment in which these children have been reared.