

WHEN you ask Hettie Loar about the college generation, don't expect an unbiased opinion. Hettie is prejudiced on the subject of students—but it's a prejudice that's all in their favor.

Living with students, looking after them, feeding them, listening to their triumphs and disappointments, Hettie has come to see students—not as a professor sees them in a classroom, or as a businessman sees them in his store, or as a minister sees them in church—but as a mother might see them at home.

Home is a gray shingle boarding house on College Street which has been established as a Sooner landmark over the past 30 years. During that time Hettie's "family" has included more than 200 coed residents and an equal number of young college men who have worked in her kitchen—as well as an endless stream of boarders (44 this semester).

A boarding house is a business, but the way Hettie runs hers, it is also a way of life. Hettie came to Norman in 1932 to keep house for her youngest sister and six of her friends. She intended to stay only a year until her sister was graduated. But she soon found that she had become tied to University life and didn't "transplant very well." So she stayed and has cared for seven coeds and employed six kitchen boys every semester since then.

Hettie is reluctant to point out any faults in her "family" or in students as a whole. "People who talk so much about students don't really know students," she says flatly. "The students today are living in a different setting—and maybe they have different rules—but they haven't changed. Maybe they are a little lazy about traditions, such as Homecoming, but that's not their fault. It just takes a little direction and leadership to keep things going."

The kitchen boys at Hettie's have been able to keep one tradition going for 30 years—the numerous pranks they play on Hettie. Hettie expects them and takes them in stride—even when the boys colored the waffle batter green on the night faculty members came to dinner.

Several daughters of Hettie's earlier roomers have come to live in that same boarding house in recent years. Next year the son of Hettie's first kitchen boy will take his father's old

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*... as a landlady
sees him*

job. Most of Hettie's kitchen boys don't need the work as their parents did. "But I like a boy who is energetic and ambitious," Hettie explains. "Often they need the work more than they need the money."

But even though Hettie contends that the individual student hasn't changed, she still recognizes the change in campus life. Most of all she misses the "gay weekend." Such weekends were even bigger events during the time when coeds were not allowed to date during the week.

"They don't dress up the way they used to," she says. "They just don't have the big formal dances any more. Years ago, even when the party was given by a single fraternity, the whole campus was invited—and went.

"Of course the peak of tradition was right after the war," Hettie recalls fondly. "The boys came back eager to get into the swing of things. Some of them even wore tails to the formals. Those were exciting times."

HAVE students become more serious? Hettie doesn't think so, but as far as her girls are concerned, she feels that they do have a more realistic approach to life. Many of them still come to college to find a husband—and there's no better place in Hettie's opinion—but "even if they know they will be getting married right after college, they still take their education a little more seriously. They realize that anything can happen. They know that they might have to support themselves and their children someday, and they want to be prepared. They also know that they may have to help their husbands get started. The average girl expects to get a job."

And what about the young college man? Hettie admits that his first thought is making money. "But he wants to be 'successful,'" she emphasizes. "My generation was more casual, but now they each have an eye on something they want."

Hettie's favorite illustration of this belief is a kitchen boy who received his Ph.D in nuclear physics last year. "When he left I told him, 'Now I expect you to become a great scientist.' He looked me right in the eye and said, 'I hope so,' and there was confidence in the way he said it. It's the most thrilling thing in the world to think what that boy will accomplish."



Hettie Loar