

Letter From Eugene Visitor Comments On Exchange

Note: Molly McMillan is an Anglo girl from South Eugene High School who visited Chemawa for a week as part of a cultural exchange program. This letter, in which she records her impressions of a week at an Indian school, is reprinted with her permission.

I want to say right now that I'm really confused about everything. I have so many mixed up feelings. I talked to so many people at Chemawa, and my head got so full, and I got really confused.

When I first came, prejudice had always been something which I knew existed, but I never really quite believed it. And here are these really great people saying something quietly about "feeling like dirt" in the public schools; they go on to say that the students at South (Eugene) seem to act superior.

I think the problem was that we (from South) came in ignorant of what the Chemawa students had faced in the public schools; we were ignorant of the whole Indian situation, knowing only "book words" about it. It was something I had never come face to face with before.

Even after I had found out what the Indians had faced at public schools, I was a little resentful when one girl said that she "didn't want no white prejudiced person" for a temporary roommate. Maybe I shouldn't be resentful, but she was prejudiced against me before she even saw me.

I don't know if I looked like I was acting superior. If I did I was unaware of it because I didn't feel superior. It bothers me, though, that kids might not want to continue in the exchange program because of these mistakes and misinterpretations. I can't begin to express the impact Chemawa made on me. It meant so much to me as a learning experience in life. Aside from that, I really came to love some of the people, and they all seemed a lot friendlier than the kids at South. I really hope that our mistakes at Chemawa will be understood.

One of the big differences was the importance of studying. I was used

to study, study, study all the time, at school and at home. I did meet a couple of people who did like to study. But, as a generality, school just didn't seem to be that important. It seems like they have to go to school just to be able to fit into our white society; yet they don't quite fit in, but it's too late to go back to their own culture. So they're kind of in the middle, and aren't really anywhere. And I think it's an insult to them stuck halfway between our culture and theirs. What can be done about this? I'd sure be confused if my culture was being squashed, and I had to try to fit into another one. I think you people at Chemawa are doing the best things possible.

One thing I really missed was privacy. I don't know how the kids at Chemawa do it. One of the Chemawa girls, after going AWOL one night, said that, "When something goes wrong, you just have to get out, because everything around here reminds you of it." I just wish things could be opened up, and kids could go in and out and around and not be AWOL. I know, there are reasons why this can't be--but maybe there are better reasons why it could be.

I think what one girl suggested--opening up the cafeteria after school for kids and teachers to get together and talk--is a good idea. I remember there was something about the cooks objecting to it, but maybe a partition (like a curtain) could be set up, dividing the cooks' working area from where the kids would be. We have one of these at South, and during lunch the partition is just opened up.

I've just begun to be aware of the Indian situation, and I'm more confused than anything else. There don't seem to be any satisfactory answers. The answers that are used just make things okay and regular on the surface. They're not really solving anything deeper.

Ever since I got back, everyone has wanted to know about Chemawa, and I'm all drained. I kept putting this letter off because I really don't know what's what right now.

Boy Of The Month Picked At McNary

McNary Hall began a program of selecting a student-of-the-month early last fall. Both the students and the staff wanted to develop some program to reward outstanding students. The award is based on performance in class and work and attitude in the dorm as well.

The winner each month receives ten dollars for a date downtown and has his picture taken and posted in the dorm lounge.

The students chosen for this honor so far this year are John Evan (September), Denny Akeya (October), Louie Phillips (November) and Ed LaClair (December).

Riding On The Bus To Cheer The Braves

by Patty Phair

How is it to ride on a bus going to a basketball game? There's usually pep club girls, cheerleaders and, naturally, spectators. Everyone is quiet before we leave, but after we're on the road, the cheerleaders start to sing cheers and the rest of us join in. If they're not singing, they're talking, joking around and laughing a lot. It is fun to ride on the bus to a game.

On the way home from a game, it's a lot more quiet. Everyone is tired and has a sore throat, from cheering the Braves on! Some girls sing cheers but not very loud. Some kids talk, but most of us just sit quietly. It's a lot more fun going to a game than it is leaving a game - victory or no victory!

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