

Morals of Today's College Students -- Second in Series

By Max Lerner

Whenever a press association gets a good quote on campus sex and morals, it goes out hot over the wires, and is avidly read.

There was the UP story last June about the four Yale boys and the three Vassar and Smith girls who stayed overnight at a cabin in a New York State park and left a mess of beer cans behind, only to be arrested and fined for using the cabin without permission.

And the story from Lincoln, Nebraska, about the six University of Nebraska boys who kidnapped high school girls to strip and photograph them. And, of course, the notorious trial of the college student who strangled his co-ed girl-friend in a fraternity house.

But the more usual press-association story involves not crime but campus morals, as in the UP dispatch the other day from the University of Wisconsin. A sociology professor called Gill seems to have advised the University authorities to take official notice of the sexually mature young men and nubile young women at the University, and to set up benches (as the UP man put it colorfully) "for student necking on a faculty-sponsored lover's lane along the wooded shores of Lake Mendota."

Knowing something about both newspapermen and professors, I suspect the language quoted is more the reporter's than the professor's.

But however he may have put it, the answer from the Dean of Women was a simple and cold No. The Dean of Men gave a qualified and judicious No; in a truly scientific spirit he wanted to know "just where the benches would be and what kind of lighting they'd have."

Obviously every news story like the one above not only over-dramatizes the problem of student morals but oversimplifies it as well.

It isn't just a question of having or not having a place for

This is the second of a series of articles on the college students of 1950—their outlook on life, their moral codes and behavior, their changing standards. The series originally ran in the New York Post.

courtship, nor of having supervised rules or making them yourself.

Despite the woeful complaints of many parents, it isn't in any sense true, that our youngsters are going to the dogs morally—or immorally. There is no "revolt" as there was in the Scott Fitzgerald period of the "lost generation."

What is true is that the young people are bewildered. They are at the age when they are moved by the uneasy stirrings of adolescence. They find themselves away from the routine and supervision of the home, probably for the first extended stretch.

For the first time also they find themselves living in a close age-group community, with everyone watching everyone closely.

Not only do they ask "what shall I do?" "what do I really want to do?" "what of my parents?" "what of myself?" but also "what will they think of me?" "how can I prove to 'them' that I am a womanly woman, a manly man?"

Thus a college boy is subjected to a double barrage of self-questionings. Not only must he ask what is right, what is moral, what will make him happy, but also how he looks in the eyes of the "peer-group" which is judging him mercilessly. That goes for the college-girl too, only more so, since she is more vulnerable to gossip, and her "rep" is at once more precious and more fragile.

Students, like the rest of us, have a moral code to live up

to; one may ask why that isn't enough. One answer is that the moral code is being repeatedly broken outside of school as well as in it. Actually, although students are generally regarded as "wild," almost every student of sexual behavior will testify that the code infringements are even greater among their contemporaries outside.

Whether in or out of college, one of the prevailing facts of our time is the gap between the moral codes to which we still formally adhere, and the actual behavior of living people. This applies to adolescents and young adults on the campus, as it applies to similar groups off the campus.

The difference, if any, is that students are more reflective and sensitive about it, more exposed to the literature of the romantic love ideal and to the constant repetition of the code of moral living. This may not change their behavior much, but it makes them more conscience-stricken and guilt-ridden because of their lapses from the code.

Thus the student finds himself caught in a barrage of conflicting forces, each pushing him in a different direction. He is still under the spell of the romantic ideal of the "one person." He is fascinated by love-as-fatality. He responds to the urgent need of his own physical nature. He responds to the American idea of testing and experimenting. He tries to live up to the general community code, which bans sexual activity or experimenting before marriage. But at the same time he feels he must also live up to the operative code which comes closer to him—that of his college peer-group by which he is judged, and by the judgment of which he is unwilling to be found wanting.

It is this very complex mental and moral world of the student which is the real story about him—this and not the over-dramatized and over-simplified sensational stories which hit the front pages and send parents into a dither of anxiety.

(TOMORROW: Campus Dating and Courtship)



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Oregon's Shaggy Dog Story

Ever since the Student Union posted its "Notice to Dogs" last term, the Editor's mail has been loaded with scores of protesting letters from our canine friends. (The Emerald Shack for years has been a haven for dogs without visible means of support).

Yes, the dogs are mad at the SU's notice which warns to beware of humans and says, "Keep your self respect—avoid them (humans). Don't let them let you in the doors . . . do you want gout, vitamin deficiencies or gas on the stomach? Beware of 'ersatz' foodstuffs—accept only natural foods and hunt these up yourself."

If the letters are any indication, the dogs feel quite put out about this. "For centuries we have remained man's best friend," a fox terrier barked at us the other day.

However we are inclined to think his bark may be worse than his bite—at least we hope so. Another dog, who has slept through ROTC classes for years and now has 20 military science credits, dropped us a line to say he knows lots of military tactics and could make life miserable for people if he took a notion.

But the letter that interested us most was the one from a Scotty who commented, "This whole thing is ridiculous. Who ever heard of a dog reading or writing?"—K.M.

The Second Cup . . .

He that can take rest is greater than he that can take cities—Franklin.

Life's race well run, Life's work well done, Life's victory won, Now cometh rest—E. H. Parker.

THE DAILY 'E' . . .
to Howard Lemons for his recent appointment as assistant to President Newburn. Lemons is an Oregon graduate, and was vice-president of the student body four years ago.
THE OREGON LEMON . . .
to the seniority rule and far-to-the-right Republicans who have kept Oregon's Wayne Morse off the Senate foreign relations committee.

On the Shelf

China's Empress Took Bloody Path to the Top

A BOOK REVIEW
By Jo Gilbert

Now an honest man can quietly and legally make his million, be kind to ostriches and snails, but dead or alive, you'll never find any reference to him on the printed page. That is, unless he gets rather nasty and murders his dear old aunt. Even then, he'll only advance to page three, column five of the local paper.

And he'll still be without fame. If he swindles the government a bit, he gets a spell in the jug, and rates a fat headline. But, a few years later who's to know?

However, if he disposes of seven of his fellow humans, including a couple of sons and a daughter-in-law—that poses a different question.

We are concerned mainly with one Chinese lady who did rather well along the homicidal line and has to her credit innumerable biographies. And, too, she ruled China for nearly fifty years, a fact which might add to her stature.

One of the more recent books concerning this fabulous woman and her extraordinary life is VENERABLE ANCESTOR, The Life and Times of Tz'u Hsi, Empress of China, by Harry Hussey (Doubleday and Company, Inc., Garden City, New York; 1949). This Ms. is as fascinating as Sabatini seasoned with a deck of Sax Rohmer.

Tz'u Hsi (alias The Old Buddha, alias Green Jade), though born in comparative poverty and whose father died in jail, was selected as one of the Emperor's concubines, the highest position open to a Manchu woman.

She rose from Number Six concubine and in the process had a son, the heir to the Throne. Upon the death of Hsien Feng, the Emperor, Tz'u Hsi and Tz'u An (Hsien's wife) outwitted relatives and ruled in the name of the child Emperor, T'ung Chih.

Assisting in the dissipation of her son when he attained his majority, she also strongly advised that his wife should commit suicide after T'ung had died as a result of a "dread disease." The wife obligingly acted upon Tz'u

Hsi's "suggestion."

The new heir to the throne was a child, Kuang Hsi, nephew to the Old Buddha and she and Tz'u An were again in power as co-regents. Kuang incited Tz'u's wrath against him when 1) he tried to choose a wife not acceptable to his guardian and 2) tried reform when attaining the throne—this reform included curtailing the power of Tz'u Hsi. As a result the Old Buddha had Kuang placed in virtual imprisonment, separating him from his favorite concubine. And eventually Tz'u An was eradicated for "personal reasons."

Along with painting the portrait of an ambitious woman, the author also shows us the setting of the Manchu dynasty in the later nineteenth and early

twentieth centuries. We were allowed into the lush court life of the Forbidden City and given an understanding of the many forces in operation at the top levels of old Chinese government.

Hussey makes the historical figures human and full of the weaknesses and complexities that are the sum total of any individual. He covers quite thoroughly the period of Tz'u Hsi's rule and lightly and deftly sketches in the background material necessary for understanding many of the attitudes expressed.

The writing is not terrific but is above average. However, the story is so fascinating that the mode of expression, good or bad, is often ignored. At the least, it does not impede the reader from getting the most from the book.

