

# Henn Mulls UO's Growth, Functions

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(Ed. Note: This article written by Thomas R. Henn, who visited the University in December, and the accompanying sketch of him by Horn are reprinted from the Sunday, Jan. 18, Oregonian.)

In a way it all looked familiar—gray skies, intermittent rain, buildings that had obviously grown up (as they should) with the growth of the university; signs of adaptation in their remodeling to new functions in the connecting passages; evidences of vigorous life in the raw earth—of levelling, of new footings going in. The students go to and form their lectures, not "with the wind in their gowns," for they do not wear them here, but still very much like our own.

Yet this university is conscious that, like the state, it is new. It is proud of its descent from the Pioneer; two bronze statues, the Pioneer Father and the Pioneer Mother, stand on the axis of the campus.

## A Closer Look

But as one looks closer so much is different.

For one thing there is a magnificent new Union building; a little raw as yet in its brick and plate glass and chromium, in which every imaginable activity is centered—a bowling alley; committee rooms for student societies; admirable lounges and browsing rooms to supplement the library; spacious halls in which to eat. Everywhere there are the signs of money profusely but, I think, wisely spent.

For if a university is anything, these young men and women must play (do not we all learn by play?) at the art of living; to organize and to lead; to persuade; to act as host or hostess; to co-operate with their fellows.

And as the closed, complex society, and the continual impact of ideas motivate them (they will not know how, nor fully understand why) they move imperceptibly down the slipways to take the water at graduation.

Yet it is less of a shock, this launching, than with us; for many of these folks will have worked at fullscale jobs in the vacations, and even during the term.

Go to the theater, and there is a stage more lavishly equipped than many a provincial theater in England; with endless experimental resources for small groups to train and rehearse under expert supervision. (One could never find them grow professionally, at home.)

## Unity in the Arts

Move across to Architecture and one is confronted with something that I have not yet seen in Europe: a whole department in which the graphic, plastic and visual arts are treated as a unity—where you may work in metal or engrave on stone; where the architect has a chance to see what the sculptor and the painter are doing; so that they may influence his building.

The progress of design moves upward from the elementary principle of color, form and line; through structures understood by making models of them; and you learn (even if you prove, at the end, not to have that strange thing called creative genius) the essential muscle and bone that underlie form and flesh, in buildings or in men.

And if, under wise guidance, you come to see that all things are one, your time has not been wasted; so that, as a student of architecture, a visitor may find you reading Shakespeare's Sonnets during your lunch hour, for

## Horn Sketches Henn's Personality

By Robert D. Horn  
Professor of English

Thomas Rice Henn, professor of English at England's great University of Cambridge, recently spent two days on the University of Oregon campus.

In addition to his scheduled lecture on the background of Irish drama, Henn managed to see a good deal of campus life. He might even claim membership in the faculty, since he also lectured to four classes in English and drama.

Everywhere he went Henn carried with him the atmosphere of a great teacher. With needless apologies, he constantly interrupted somewhat

startled students with questions as to what they were reading and doing.

Thus he deftly sampled the American student mind, in the classroom, the corridors and study halls of the library, and in the laboratory. What he found appears to have pleased him, as his comments show.

While Henn quoted widely and constantly from the poets, especially Shakespeare and Yeats, he shamed himself to be no refugee from the Ivory Tower.

Along with being a lover of poetry, he is a passionate devotee to boat building and sailing, an expert on fly fishing, with a book on fly tying among

his published works, and a high ranking officer in the British army. As a member of General Eisenhower's staff, he had charge of 80 officers, half British and half American, during the planning of the Normandy invasion.

His most recent book, "The Apple and the Spectroscope," grew out of a course of lecture on poetry designed especially for students of science. In this and in his larger study of W. B. Yeats, "The Lonely Tower" (1950), he shows the broad interests in all the arts and their relation to everyday living that are prominent in his "look at a western university."

the best of reasons: because you like them. I found an attractive girl doing just that.

Everywhere there is a sense of energy and purpose, different perhaps from our own, because in some ways it is differently focussed. Most of these students look younger than those of Oxford and Cambridge, for half of ours do their two years' service before they come into residence.

There are far more women on the campus here (and we don't have a campus anyway); an element of distraction will be balanced against the greater sensibility and conscientiousness of the woman student.

Loyalties which with us would be centered on a college, with its history of four or five hundred years, are here split—I do not know in what proportions—between the fraternity and the university itself.

## Noisier Background

The students live more gregariously, and against a more noisy background; the inestimable value of a room of one's own, of having to be and to think alone, is perhaps less fully realized.

They work in the afternoons instead of playing games—do they watch them rather than play them—and they do not seem to work or talk so late at night. The rooms of the professors, the offices at which their students call, are more cramped, less gracious than the 'living sets' which such men are found at home: where a man waiting in an outer study is likely to find surroundings which are more pleasant—in books, pictures, and perhaps human interest.

The impact of all this on the visitor is confusing, and a little frightening. Our own organization is casual; here everything seems tightly controlled, most of all by the students themselves. In ten years time, they tell me, the numbers of students who claim admission will have increased enormously. There is room for expansion on this generous site; the temporary huts which they, (like ourselves) have inherited from the postwar period will one day be replaced.

What is the destiny of such a university? How can it best continue to serve Oregon—a state not yet a hundred years old—and that wider state of our own way of life?

As one ponders the problem, it seems arguable that such a university has really four separate functions, and not (as it seems to an outsider) a single confused one.

It should seek to turn out, as regards the majority of its students, balanced and reasonably educated men and women, whose general discipline would include five or six subjects with some

specialization in the last two years. (Is there not a case, in any event, for some carefully planned "filtering" system at the end of the sophomore year?) This majority will go forward with a general education, so designed that they can project at least some parts of it into the future.

Those who are suitable for 'advanced' studies might split into two theoretical 'streams'.

One would be composed of the candidates for higher educational posts; some would move eventually to the Ph. D. stage, though I have more to say on this.

The second stream would be the men of firstclass minds with no intention of going into the teaching profession.

These persons would form, for the remainder of their lives a 'pool' from which men and women would be drawn into civic, state and federal government as opportunity arose. They would not necessarily be trained in 'civics' or in 'social sciences,' and there is probably a case for encouraging different and more severe discipline such as mathematics or law; but it should be possible to create a tradition by which such people could see their future responsibilities as citizens in just that light. (Nothing is more striking, to a visitor, than the ability and willingness of the American system to use such men on secondment, as it were, to take part in great issues of the state or nation.

## Must Accept Call

I believe that it is part of a university's task to imbue its students with the expectation that, if they prove their capacities, they are liable to be called to such service; and that they must accept, whatever the price in material welfare.

There is, I think, a fourth component, as exemplified by the men and women who have been through the art and architecture school, and who seem to me a factor of immense political importance in the national life.

Provided they show some aptitude for their own highly specialized arts, they might enjoy some relaxation of purely academic standards; for these things, as I saw them being taught at this university, are not the "soft option" that they are often considered to be. And if such students are introduced, scientifically, to the skills of their hands, to a sensuous knowledge of their environment; if they can be taught to feel as well as to know they will draw in through their hands and eyes a basic knowledge that will bring to life their later encounter with the Western Tradition of Europe.

We should not expect that the genuine creative artist will emerge frequently; and he is

provided for by a system—again unique in my experience—of granting a higher degree for purely creative work. But if a hundred such men and women, of real understanding, could be turned loose annually into the community, the effect on that community, in half a century or less, would be incalculable.

## Learning How to Live

I do not suggest that it would produce a new western renaissance; I do suggest that it would do much to restore the balance—against all our technological development—in learning how to live.

Of the professorial staff who were my very gracious hosts it is difficult to speak. At a guess I would say that they, and the whole administrative system, seemed to be more tightly organized, and with more elaborate clerical facilities, than one would expect to find in an English university. They seemed to be more conscious of their responsibilities, more closely in touch with their students, than in several institutions that I have seen in the eastern United States.

I can only make some general reflections. A great university must have great scholars; for only then will students from far and wide come to sit at their feet. But greatness is scholarship, in any true sense, cannot be completely measured by any of the normal scales. You may have men who are of international reputation for their published research. They are immensely valuable.

But beside them stand others, whose scholarship may be as finely tempered; whose memorials are not on library shelves, but in many generations of pupils whom they have taught, not necessarily how to be scholars, but how to live. Every university needs both; more of the second, perhaps, than of the first, who will be in any event rare.

And once a university becomes so large and cumbersome that its president does not know his professors as friends, and the professors do not know their pupils; if those who govern it like the lazy way of assessing the value of its staff by the weight of their writings or by the multiplicity of their degrees, that university loses one of its main justifications for existence.

It must teach; and in the last resort it must teach not the mass but the individual. Therefore a university must keep itself small enough to be human; to be, as Aristotle calls it, 'perspicuous'. For only by human contacts can the individual dignity of man, his immensely complicated needs, be fostered and fulfilled.

Here, as elsewhere (and with

us) the problem of these human relationships is continuous. Five or six thousand people, adolescent, alert, keen on their prospective careers, thrown into a fairly complex social system which may be quite strange to them—it is to be expected that a number of them (and those of the finest material) will have their difficulties.

## Teachers Must Advise

Much has been done here by appointing advisers and counselors; men and women who have qualities of tact, sympathy and leadership, and experience in breaking strains. But however good their will, intuitive knowledge of such difficulties is perhaps more common in older men and women; and, just as the administrative and teaching sides should never be wholly separated, so the counselor and the teacher should, if possible, be one; for the adolescent's problems are often integral with his teaching, and because his teachers alone can provide a sense of continuity between the generations of students.

The psychological strain of an academic life is considerable; few young people know fully either their strength or their limitations. Troubles which seem laughable at thirty loom very large at nineteen. An older person, who is accessible for confidences that would never be told to relations, is often invaluable in restoring perspective.

It has often been said that research is of paramount importance in a university. Up to a point that is true; but no amount of research can redeem a failure to provide vital and illuminating teaching.

A continent-wide problem to that of the Ph. D.; for which a man or woman may spend three or four of the best years of his life in work which is of no value whatever for the furtherance of human knowledge and is of dubious value to the researcher.

Yet—such is the complexity of the academic ladder—it has become an almost essential academic passport. Is it not possible to devise some method by which they only proceed to research who are filled with zeal for it and for a particular subject; in which a higher degree such as the M. A. could be accepted as evidence of competence in a particular subject, and the writing of serious work postponed until the writer is ripe for this?

## Know Books and Men

If he is a natural teacher, his first ten years will provide the younger scholar with far more knowledge both of books and men than a long and dull grind at research; which too often seems to kill the sympathetic or illuminating quality of mind which our civilization seems to lack.

The impressions grow a little clearer. Here is a significant thing—with energy, wealth, industries, raw material, a vigorous growing people, wise guidance, and superb buildings, and a rapidly growing tradition; given a clear view of its function, there is nothing that it cannot do, political, civic and educational.

But it must keep itself reasonably small, so that it may be a society; it must grow naturally, creating its own character from its teachers and pupils, not modeling itself on other institutions, but drawing new blood from the exchange of ideas with them; and keeping in mind, perhaps, this form of its function, scholarly, political, civic and educational, of which I have spoken.