

Robert Clark...

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But that controversy never reached the peaks of violence, emotion or publicity of the war issue. It is probably safe to say that now, most University students — if they even know who the president is — view him with an unspecific sort of hostility or just plain ignore him.

Clark has been almost universally described by intimates as a "close" man, "not at all the back slapping type." He feels that seeming introversion may be a factor which led to little communication between him and the larger student population. He says one of his regrets is that traditional lines of communication, such as house meetings, dorm meetings and fall convocations have not really been open to him.

That directly ties into another of his major regrets: the fact that a sense of "comraderie" or "community" has not been fostered at the University. "A sense of community binds people together. The professional schools have it, but it is almost totally lacking in the large liberal arts areas."

Instrumental in setting up the Honors College, he said he has long been an advocate of "experimental colleges" where students and faculty members would stay together for as long as three years exploring alternative means of education. He says he hopes, eventually, for such schools to be set up within the University.

He says he is still convinced of the workability of another idea

which received little or no support at the time he proposed it.

In an effort to get teachers to increase their teaching loads, Clark said, "What I wanted to propose was that at least half of the teachers increase their teaching loads one term by offering one freshman or sophomore level seminar limited to fifteen students and limited to a topic that interested the professor."

"If we had four hundred faculty members offering these courses through the course of the year, we would have a wide range of topic offering the students a wide range of interest. We could say to every freshman or sophomore coming in, 'you'll have one term where you'll get a small seminar with a professor on a topic that is of interest to you.'"

He said he thinks it would be an idea of tremendous "educational excitement."

It hasn't all been regrets for Clark, however. He says he is particularly satisfied with what he terms the protections of "certain values, and preserving those both in times of conflict and financial exigency."

He says he is also particularly proud of advances made by students in their role in the University. Mentioning student control of incidental fees and student participa-

tion in faculty committees and in the University Senate, he said "Student participation is real and I think it's more clearly defined than it was before. For example, student governance in the dormitories and their freedom from being forced to live the dormitories."

"These are real advances in the autonomy of individuals." For the future, Clark said he would take a sabbatical leave from the University of which he has been named the first "President Emeritus."

He and his wife Opal have a house on Mercer Lake, near the coast and one suspects that's where he'll spend much of his time writing and exploring the woods with a copy of Henry David Thoreau's *Walden* under his arm.

To describe him as a "nature lover" would be an understatement of gigantic proportions. For fully a third of a recent interview, he lovingly described the trees on campus, some of which were "barely hop high when I came here," he says.

Almost caressing an imaginary tulip-tree blossom as he described it, he said, "I think my love of the campus is intensified because many of the trees seem to be my personal friends."

Until Clark retires, he will continue to spend every spare mo-

ment wrestling with the problems of a University budget which must be stretched almost to the breaking point to keep the school alive, and making way for a new president.


Thus, with his career drawing to a close, Clark is still devoting body and soul to the campus he loves.

Whether his decisions or actions are good or bad or popular or unpopular seem now less important than the time and energy this soft-spoken man devoted to them. He is 65 years old and has less than a month to go on the job, yet his concern for the school is as great now as it was in 1943.

Perhaps the only way to explain or summarize the enigma which is Robert Clark is to look to his favorite author, Thoreau, who said:

"Time is but the stream I go a-fishing in. I drink at it; but while I drink I see the sandy bottom and detect how shallow it is. Its thin current slides away, but eternity remains...The intellect is a cleaver; it discerns and rifts its way into the secret of things. I do not wish to be any more busy with my hands than is necessary. My head is hands and feet. I feel all my best faculties concentrated in it. My instinct tells me that my head is an organ for burrowing, as some creatures use their snout and fore paws, and with it I would mine and burrow my way through these hills. I think that the richest vein is somewhere hereabouts; so by the divining-rod and thin rising vapors I judge; and here I will begin to mine."

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