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Another Blow for Voluntary ROTC

Oregon State University students, in a student body election, have gone on record as opposing the compulsory feature of ROTC. This is in contrast to a vote of the Oregon State faculty last winter. The faculty wanted to keep the first two years of campus military training compulsory, with the last two years, which normally lead to a reserve commission, remaining elective.

fer when the first two years are also voluntary.

So if compulsory ROTC cannot be justified on the grounds that it satisfies a military obligation, nor on the grounds that it provides badly needed officers, then how can it be justified?

The state board of higher education voted 5 to 2 to keep the compulsory feature at Eugene and Corvallis. Three of the five who voted to keep it compulsory said their opinions might be changed if experiments at other schools show that the voluntary feature is satisfactory.

The Register-Guard thinks the OSU students show more courage and wisdom than their teachers show. Compulsory ROTC is a hold-over from another era, an era when young men had no universal military obligation and when the only time in his life that a young man might wear a uniform was on those afternoons as a college freshman and sophomore.

Indeed, to be consistent the board should now institute compulsory ROTC programs at Portland State, Southern Oregon, Eastern Oregon and Oregon College of Education. These institutions do not have ROTC. If the board is satisfied that they do not, why is it not satisfied to see a modification at the University and Oregon State?

Nor can it be defended on the grounds that it provides badly needed reserve officers. It is the voluntary second half of the program that provides the officers. They are the interested ones, young men whose first two years of military training is now impaired because so many reluctant one-a-week soldiers are in their basic classes.

One final word, however. Nothing said here is meant to disparage the ROTC program, nor to suggest that the smart young man not get in on this program. He'll find it pays, for as an officer he'll be better paid, better treated and allowed more freedom than fellow soldiers who serve out their military obligation as privates.

Make Haste Slowly

In post-mortems on the recent Eugene city election, one recurring comment was that the City Council lost its fight for unadulterated authority in street matters because of its off-again-on-again initiation and revision of one-way street patterns.

Frankly, those arguing this way seem to oversimplify the task of making an outmoded streets system suffice a little longer. They also seem to be arguing that a wise council would be one that sticks with its mistakes rather than attempt to rectify them.

However, there is some basis for urging the council to move away from a trial-and-error system of deciding which streets should be used for one-way traffic, and in which direction. In July, or thereabouts, the council will receive results of an extensive traffic study that has been conducted here by the State Highway Dept.

Meantime, suggestions such as Councilman Dan Christensen made this week for reversal of traffic flows on 11th and 13th Avenues should be held in limbo. The council's committee-of-the-whole has approved his motion that an immediate study be made to determine if this shift, making 11th Avenue an eastbound route and 13th Avenue a westbound one, would be merited.

All the study possible is needed, but hasty action certainly is not. It may be that the highway department's survey will lead the council to believe that a number of changes are needed in our one-way streets. If so, all these changes should be made at once in order that the full effects can be coordinately planned and the public saved the necessity of learning, unlearning and then relearning which streets run which way.

Obvious

The Russian name "Yuri" means "George" in our tongue. Now we know why Comrade Gagarin was the one they let do it first.

Colorful Names

The Oregon Journal laments the disappearance of colorful place names. It regrets that in Franklin, W. Va., city fathers are changing the name of Dog Alley and Dirty Run to Dogwood Lane and Walnut Street. We regret this, too, just as we regret that here in Oregon so many of our ancestors were influenced by Sir Walter Scott novels.

We have a few colorful whisky creeks, rattlesnake buttes, and grizzly peaks. But we don't have as many as we deserve. We no longer have a Gouge Eye. That was the name of a friendly little community in Harney County. Gouge Eye was so named for obvious reasons. But the Post Office Department didn't think the name dignified enough.

Portland still has its Goose Hollow and its Slabtown, but those are locally applied names for neighborhoods and they have no official standing. Bend now has a neighborhood with a name something like Westminstershire Terrace or Bolingbroke Gardens. It used to be called Home Brew Flats. We liked it better the old way.

Accolade

In Portland, Commissioner Ormond Bean has led the fight, successfully, for free swimming pools. For this the Portland Reporter suggests the commissioner be awarded the title, "Honorary Kid." It's a title he should wear proudly.

Bloodthirsty

One of the big automobile firms has come out with a new model called the "Cutlass." Add this to the showrooms full of cars named Lancer, Dart, Saber, Fury, and Invicta. No wonder we seem to be a bloodthirsty bunch of drivers. We await the unveiling of the new, powerful Mayhem-8 and the super Carnage sedan.



(Courtesy of the Museum of the City of New York)

CONEY ISLAND MAGNET — On the theory that the greatest show is people, George Tilyou turned a rich man's resort into a playground for the masses. The enormous success of Steeplechase Park attests to his abilities as a master showman and inventor of amusements.

Master Coney Island Showman's Formula Still Good

Let People Amuse Themselves And They'll Pay You for It

EDITOR'S NOTE: A shrewd promoter, who recognized people would pay to make themselves look ridiculous, built the madcap town that is Coney Island. Still king of them all, the playground of breathtaking rides, colliding cars, and tumbling barrels continues to enchant summer fun-seekers. A freelance writer describes the formula that makes Coney always a hit show.

By PETER LYON

On every warm summer weekend on Coney Island, a great swarm of people may be found heading for a slow-moving line that leads always to the same entertainment device. Typically, they will wait nearly an hour to enjoy a ride that lasts for perhaps one mildly exhilarating minute. It's the most popular attraction in any amusement park in the world—the Steeplechase Horses, a lasting monument to Coney's greatest showman, the man who in 1897 installed it as the principal attraction of his carnival grounds. This was George Cornelius Tilyou, whose formula was a matchless mixture of sentimentality, shrewd psychology, and a suffusion of sophomoric sex.

Coney Island's history falls into three well-defined periods — the scandalous, the elegant, and the garish—and the Tilyou family bestrides them all.

A PRECIOUS INSIGHT The first period was dominated by a political boss, John Y. McKane, who swaggered to power at the head of a motley crew of barkeeps, gamblers, pugilists, thieves and bawds, and was finally tucked away in Sing Sing in 1894 for election frauds.

Then came the period of elegance, with millionaire sportsmen anchoring their yachts in Coney's waters, racing their horses at its three tracks, and squiring their ladies to Coney's swank restaurants. The advent of the subway, about the time of the First World War, brought the garish period: The masses descended upon Coney's beach and boardwalk.

Due largely to George C. Tilyou, his family has had a hand in

each of these mutations. No one in the outdoor amusement field had a better psychological insight into what people wanted when they sought entertainment. He showed that people will pay good money over and over again for the privilege of supplying the entertainment themselves. During the season, the Steeplechase pavilion resounds with the merriment of those who have shelled out to make themselves look ridiculous.

In 1865, when George was three years old, his parents leased a huge ocean-front lot at Coney, and on it built the Surf House. Thanks to the elder Tilyou's political connections, the hotel became a favorite resort for New York and Brooklyn city officials. By the time young George was 14, he had already displayed a precocious insight into the psychology of the holiday pleasure-seeker.

That summer Coney was crowded with Midwestern tourists drawn to the ocean after attending the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition. Correctly guessing that these simple folk would believe that an article had value only if it had a price on it, he filled medicine bottles with salt water and cigar boxes with sand, and sold them by the score at a quarter apiece.

When he was 17, real estate beckoned. Though land at Coney was firmly held by the township, there was a brisk and piratical traffic in leases. Presently, young Tilyou was netting \$250 a month, operating out of an office made by clearing two bathhouses together.

But this was just money, and it bored him. He thirsted to be a showman. When he was 20, he and his father put up the island's first theater. But there were problems with McKane, who held

Coney Island in his fist, extracting from every businessman a tithe, and encouraging the most disreputable elements to open saloons.

When his misrule became the subject of a legislative investigation, Tilyou was the only island resident who dared blow the whistle on the chief. He named the houses of prostitution; he had seen McKane's justices of the peace in gambling places.

But while the legislative committee could stigmatize McKane, his friends in the state assembly were too powerful, and his grip on Coney for a time stayed secure. George found it necessary to retire from the real-estate business. His capital dwindled.

In 1893 he married Mary O'Donnell and took off on his honeymoon to see Chicago World's Columbian Exposition. There he was captivated by the Ferris Wheel, and decided to borrow money to have one built on Coney Island. The time was propitious, since McKane was in trouble.

SURE-FIRE DEVICE

Tilyou studied his plaything with hundreds of incandescent lamps, and the wheel was making money before it had been in operation 50 days.

By that time, McKane was in Sing Sing, Coney Island was part of Brooklyn and decent people were again flocking to the beach. Tilyou decided to branch out. He imported an Intramural Bicycle Railway; he built the Double Dip Chutes. But these were scattered all over Coney. When Capt. Paul Boyton, the first frogman, arrived at Coney to open Sea Lion Park, where his stellar attraction was a kind of aquatic toboggan slide in flat-bottomed boats, Tilyou was impressed by the idea of a park enclosed by a fence.

He cast about for a sure-fire device like Boyton's, and decided the most popular sport of the time was horseracing. In 1897, he opened Steeplechase Park, where the premier attraction was the Steeplechase Horses: an undulant, curving metal track over which wooden horses ran on wheels, coursing down by gravity and up by momentum.

In 1901, Tilyou went scouting at the Pan-American Exposition at Buffalo and came back with the exposition's most spectacular attraction, a Trip to the Moon, plus the Giant See-Saw, having gone into partnership with the inventors of these entertainment innovations.

PROOF OF SUCCESS

The season of 1902 was one of the wettest in Coney's history. Business at Boyton's Sea Lion Park was macabre. But thanks to A Trip to the Moon, Steeplechase did handsomely. It did so well, in fact, that Tilyou's new partners decided to build a park of their own that would drive Steeplechase out of business.

What they built, at a cost of nearly one million dollars, was Luna Park, a magic fairyland of spires and minarets and towers, over which they had strewn a profusion of entertainments.

Its stupendous success was attested by the fact that there was an immediate attempt to imitate it. Just across the avenue from Luna, a real-estate speculator spent three and a half million to build Dreamland, where everything was on an exuberant scale. There were a million incandescent light bulbs shedding radiance on flower-topped columns,

an esplanade where a band played seemingly without pause, and a great ballroom built out on a pier.

But all these delights had by no means crowded Steeplechase into the ocean. George Tilyou enthusiastically welcomed competition. His intuition had equipped him with a different formula: people. All he needed to do was contrive the most appropriate backgrounds for his star performers. By 1905 he had invented five of them:

The Wedding Ring, where as many as 70 people at a time could perch insecurely while four muscular attendants rocked it back and forth.

The Barrel of Love, where passengers were strapped into seats in a revolving drum that rolled gently down one incline and up another.

The Dew Drop, where patrons were whirled down from a tall tower feet first.

The Whichaway, a swing that whirled its passengers eccentrically in any of four directions, but invariably catapulted a girl into her escort's lap.

The Earthquake Stairway, which was a flight of steps split down the middle to jerk its passengers erratically up and down.

NO DIFFERENCES YET In the following half century, all three of Coney's parks were to be ripped by fire. But only at Steeplechase would there be a disposition to rebuild.

The day after an 18-hour fire in July, 1907, leveled his park, Tilyou set up a large sign where the entrance had been:

I have trouble today that I did not have yesterday. I had troubles yesterday that I have not today.

On this site will be erected shortly a better, bigger, greater Steeplechase Park.

Admission to the Burning Ruins—10 cents.

In a sense the fire was a boon, for it enabled Tilyou to design a steel and glass pavilion over a five-acre hardwood floor, called the Pavilion of Fun. Here he concentrated all his earlier devices, and added still others.

He evolved the Human Roulette Wheel, a whirling concave disc of polished wood, a melting pot in which the ingredients were laughter, exhibitionism, and sex. Another addition was the Human Pool Table, a set of flat spinning discs. When a girl came whirling down the polished slide, she came to rest on one disc, was flung to a second, her skirts flying, her squeals rising to the roof, her friends doubled up with laughter. And the Barrel of Love was now a great revolving drum, so that two or three girls without escorts might find, before they had negotiated the sliding, slippery, treacherous 30 feet, that escorts were thrown into their arms.

With the coming of the subway, Coney gained millions of patrons and lost some of its effervescence. But neither these changes nor Tilyou's death in 1914 made any difference in the Steeplechase formula. Season after season, thousands flock into the park, where sooner or later they end up standing in line to ride on the Steeplechase Horses, as people have done now for two generations.

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(Courtesy of Gottschow-Schlesinger)

THE COMPETITION — Luna Park by night was a fairyland of soaring minarets. Built in 1903 for a million dollars — much of it borrowed from "Bet-a-Million" Gates — it was a competitor of Steeplechase Park until 1949 when the last of Coney Island's three greatest fires destroyed it all.