at the first bend arrows swished among them from the cliff above. At the next outside bend on that side of the river the Indians, having walked a hundred yards or so, directed across were waiting for them again, and so on for several desperate bends. One of the Venezuelan crew was wounded in the leg, and Saturn narrowly escaped death when one of the long-barbed arrows discharged from almost directly above drove through his hat-brim. Even if I had had any desire for such mementos I should have preferred the puncture nearer to the edge than the crown, which it wasn't.

After a good deal of trouble we reached Caño del Norte, a major tributary, at three in the morning. Here we left the men in their canoes to pole and haul themselves up against the boiling current, and struggled on alone with the empty Canadian canoe trailing the launch. Various familiar difficulties and the unfamiliar one of a tree fallen across the stream which the swollen waters approached so closely as to throw some doubt on the possibility of our getting through at all. But at last we covered the few miles and hove in sight of Camp 2 at 7 a.m.

As is often the case when one has reason to be very tired, I was not at all. The coincidence of stimulating novelty and familiar comforts (such as the fragrance of frying bacon from the messhouse and the nearby bathhouse) which was Camp 2, affected me as a night's sleep is expected to. The incongruous foreign oil derrick with its native palm-thatched bethouse, the typical row of bunkhouses with walls of screen wire and pine and indigenous roofs, the ruddy Americans and the pallid Venezuelans—all this was a commonplace to me, but not at the end of so long a road as we had come, in the midst of a wilderness so isolated. We washed up and joined Avery and Fred and Jorgensen at breakfast. There was plenty to talk about. Avery and Fred, impatient at the long delay of the reinforcements, had started out the previous morning (when we started from Camp 1), with the few helpers remaining, along the main trail that had been cut to the mountains in the west which signal the rising of the Buena Esperanza anticline. They were on mules, riding close ahead of the natives laden with guns, food, camp equipment, and transit. In the van were two frolicking little dogs entrusted with "scouting." About 7 kilometers west of camp a flurry of arrows swept them from a hillock ahead. The party broke and ran back along the trail, leaving one of the little dogs wounded. One of the arrows had struck and stuck in Fred's stirrup-guard (of heavy leather as commonly furnished on army McClellan saddles), and had wrenched out as the mule wheeled. Fred believed only five or six arrows had been fired, and that the ambushing party was of that number. In the evening the Indians, evidently heartened by their victory, came to the edge of the clearing and shot many arrows into the camp buildings. Since dawn the whole outfit had been searching for these souvenirs, and had found many. The plan was now to take a heavily armed party without incumbrances to the scene of the ambush.

(To be continued)

"Holding no grudge"

A Sooner analyzes her education

From "The Students Speak Out" By Virginia Nelson, 29

EDITOR'S NOTE - An essay written by Miss Virginia Nelson, '29 junior, now a reporter for the Oklahoma City Times, submitted in a national contest held by The New Republic, is included in a volume just published, The Students Speak Out (The New Republic Dollar Series, New York, 1929, $1). The essay was an outgrowth of a stimulating class in journalism conducted by Miss May Frank of the journalism faculty, in which independent discussion was promoted and students encouraged "to speak out." The article is reprinted by kind permission of the editors of The New Republic.

I am just trailing around the last lap of a four-year college course. The college in question is extremely typical; a big, growing mid-west university, possessed of all the usual evils, the usual advantages of its hundreds of replicas. I have been a part of this school in these four years; I have yelped loudly and waved chrysanthemums at football games; I have worn white robes and been stirred to tears at sorority initiations; I have sat bored to a fish-eyed coma through interminable hours of lectures. In short, I have been an orthodox student.

But as the end draws near, I find an unorthodox attitude insinuating itself into my smugness. I am assailed by doubts. Was this stress on athletics a gesture colorful, but basically unwholesome? Was it the ritual of sorority life a process of hokum by which the sisters who wore the badge convinced themselves that they were superior to those who did not? Were these lectures meaningless and futilely wasted hours?

It's a trite saying that college is the best part of one's life, but I honestly believe it. Spent at an impressionable period when the individual may be made into a fine citizen or a cheap scoff-law, when one's capacity for the high thrill of living is the keenest, these four or five years should certainly be of utmost importance.

If the individual during this period is shuffled through a machine like a bundle of straw, if he is handed bromides and platitudes instead of clear-cut thinking, if he is turned out of the institution a dogmatic note-taker, then he has been cheated. And I think that in these respects I have been cheated.

I hold no grudge against my university. It has done the best it could, and in a few cases, better. The fault lies with the whole modern American educational system; that system has not been changed is due largely to general apathy. And to be frank with ourselves, nothing practical can be done about it immediately. To make the drastic changes which are needed will require a gradual process, an educating both of the public mind and the public pocket-book. But at least one can dream of what college might be; one can visualize the kind of school to which one would like to send his grandchildren. I have mine complete in every detail except the grandchildren.

Let us assume primarily—and necessarily—that my ideal college has plenty of money to run on. The first thing I would do is to abolish all large classes, which should have gone out long ago, but have been continued. I believe, because of lack of funds with which to hire enough instructors. In my opinion there should not be more than fifteen students to one teacher. In a class of this size, it is possible for pupils and teachers to know each other personally. (I, who have gone through many a course in which I did not learn the instructor's name for half a semester, and in which I remained to him number 108, could appreciate this!)

Small classes would also make possible the discussion method rather than the lecture. The classroom in my ideal college would be a place where an informal group could gather to thrash a problem out. The decisions they reached would perhaps not be very important; the thing is that they would actually use their minds, would have some practice in tackling a proposition and thinking it through to a logical conclusion. Facts are forgotten soon after one leaves college; the best one can hope for is to acquire the ability to think. The best chance the student has to acquire this ability is in small classes, where teacher and student are as intimate as possible; where discussion,
even argument, is rife; where the student leaves the class with perhaps his mind in a turmoil, perhaps feeling that the world is full of more thrilling problems than he will ever comprehend; but at least not in a state of dull acquiescence.

The size of the school as a whole does not matter, if the right ratio of teachers to students be established. Given that, as much can be accomplished in a school of 10,000 students as in one of 1,000; more, I am a little inclined to believe. A large college gives the pupil the idea of bigness, that he is a part of an important whole. The small institution is liable to make the student feel his own importance too much; he can too easily become the big frog in the little puddle.

As for the often-argued value of personal contact to be gained in the smaller schools, I think that is negligible. Each person inevitably forms his own clique; anyway; and in a large school one avoids much of that petty curiosity and prying into personal affairs, characteristic of small towns, which arises from everyone’s knowing too much about everyone else’s business.

However, I would reserve the right to select the students for my school. Through every practical means—general entrance examinations, intelligence tests, records of past achievements—I would endeavor to exclude all who were not mentally alert, capable of work, and genuinely interested in getting an education. I realize that this plan is not perfect; all the examinations in the world would not matter, if the right ratio of teachers to students be established. Given that, there is time enough for the student to turn his attention to how to make money.

I should, with one fell sweep, do away with grades. To quote an article I read recently, “The graduate of the ideal college would need no degree to distinguish him from the uneducated person.” He would, above all, have gained that perspective which sees that a person’s education consists in what he knows, and not in how many sheepskins hang on his walls. In the same spirit I should abolish the grading system as meaningless and futile. It is impossible to set an arbitrary estimate on what a student has gotten out of a course. I should put the responsibility entirely on the student; if he wished to learn, he would inevitably learn; if he came to college but not for knowledge, any number of flunks and conditions would not change him. And whose bad luck would it be but his own?

Certainly athletics play an important part in undergraduate life; I think the evils they have fallen into have been largely financial. In the race for bigger and bigger enrollments, resulting in more money, colleges have turned sports into a disgustingly commercial thing. Athletics should be participated in by the school as a whole, not by a few hired experts; drive the money-god off the gridiron and the basketball court, and I warrant the games would return to their normal importance.

To do this, I should restrict inter-collegiate, and place more emphasis on intramural contests. Instead of one crack team that performed again and again before crowded stadia, I should substitute games between classes, between organizations, between departments. Inter-collegiate contests would be participated in by varying groups of athletes. And all contests would be free of charge. Certainly that would put the affair on an amateur basis rather than a professional; perhaps a great deal of the hectic interest in college athletics would die out. But that would be a good thing. More of the students would get the benefit out of the exercise and sportsmanship, rather than the vicarious thrill of the spectator.

Which, I venture, was the original purpose of college athletics.

The question of fraternities and sororities is a difficult one. One must concede the natural tendency among humans to form cliques; and there is a child-like pleasure in the ritual and masquerading which Greek organizations provide. Yet there is a definite evil in the fraternity and sorority system as it exists and grows today. I have seen too much heartbreak on the part of those who were left out, often resulting in a serious life-time inferiority complex; I have seen snobbishness and false evaluation of associates generated within fraternities, which, incidentally, is spreading beyond college and into our cities and country towns.

Too often, both in college and out, one hears the question, “What fraternity does he belong to?” asked as a basis for forming an opinion of a person. It is a new system of caste which has arisen in our country in the past ten years, and which is getting too serious a grip on our minds.

For these reasons, I believe that fraternities and sororities would be excluded from the Utopian college. This scheme might not work; one might, very probably, see the old groups and clans organizing, with their secret rites, and their convictions that those outside of the pale were inferior creatures. But I should hope that the students admitted to my college would have enough intelligence, would benefit enough from the liberal, broadminded atmosphere around them, to evaluate a person for what he does and is, rather than for the badge he wears on his vest.

And this is what college might be. I believe that some day education will at least approach this form.