Discovery and learning

CONVOCATION ADDRESS SEPTEMBER 20, 1932

BY PRESIDENT W. B. BIZZELL

The exercises of this hour mark the opening of the Fortieth Annual Session of the University of Oklahoma. Education at all levels, from the elementary school to the university, has received serious consideration at the hands of the people of this state. The University of Oklahoma was brought into existence through an act of the Territorial Legislature of Oklahoma in 1890, and the first academic session began in the fall of 1892. During this entire time reasonable financial support has been provided and thousands of students have sought the educational advantages offered here. While forty years is a relatively short period of time as we measure the history of universities in this country and in Europe, measured in terms of accomplishment the period has been a significant one.

Faculty members and students have assembled about this time each year as assembled about this time each year as the work of a new session has begun. It happens that no two years of college life are ever exactly alike. New conditions and new problems arise from time to time that change the outlook and create a new situation for every educational institution. Certainly, we are beginning this college year with new problems confronting us. The years of economic and financial distress have seriously affected educational institutions everywhere. The University of Oklahoma, like all other agencies of human society, is seriously affected by these conditions. The institution has been compelled to adopt a policy of retrenchment—retrenchment that has cut deep into the resources of the institution. But I wish to assure you that while strict economy will need to be practiced this year, every possible effort will be made to maintain the standards of instruction that have prevailed in the past.

I am fully aware that many of you are coming to college with limited resources. To some of you this will mean privation; to others, extreme hardship. But I think you are wise in coming to college this year. Fortunately for you, there has not been a time in a generation when you could attend school as economically as you can today. It is desirable for you to enter college this year because opportunities for employment are very limited; and with the thousands of men and women out of employment, who are the sole support of families, it is better for our country that you avoid vocational competition and prepare for the better days that are ahead.

But while this is an anxious time, I do not believe that we should yield to discouragement or despair. The history of the past should supply us with some encouragement for the future. The university has had difficulties in other years. It passed through the trying period of the World war. These were years of uncertainty and difficulty. Even more serious difficulties have confronted the university from time to time, but the institution has weathered every storm and passed through every crisis in its continued march of progress. Let us hope that it will come through the present economic depression in the same way.

I remind you that there has never been a time since the university opened its doors that there were not students enrolled who were poor in purse but ambitious to secure an education. Many of these today are among the state's most useful citizens. Some of them have won distinction in almost every field of human endeavor. What they have done, you can do. While the number of you, who are confronted with financial difficulties today, is undoubtedly far greater than the number in any preceding year, your individual difficulties are not greater than those of others who have preceded you in the quest for an education.

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The Sooner Magazine

November

THE PROCESS OF BEING DISCOVERED

It is not my intention this morning to dwell upon these problems. I prefer to direct your thoughts in other channels. The subject of my discussion was suggested by an advertisement that appeared recently in the Saturday Review of Literature in which a young man sought employment. He recommended himself in the following words:

Young intellectual (?) unblighted by civilization, naturally sensitive, responsive (depending on stimulus), freed of inhibition, et al, and highly articulate, interested in being discovered.

This advertisement impressed me as being rather unusual. After meditating over the phraseology of this description, I began to speculate as to how many of our young people might be cataloged in these terms. It occurred to me that perhaps this young man, after all, might not be so very different from many other young men and women, particularly those who are enrolled in our colleges and universities.

I do not know, however, to what extent the average college student is "unblighted by civilization" or to what degree he is "highly articulate" because I am not sure that I know what these phrases mean; but I am sure that most college students are responsive to stimuli (not always to the stimuli of learning) and that they are rather free (perhaps too free) of inhibitions. But it is reasonable to presume that every young intellectual is interested in being discovered and that this is the essential reason for his coming to college.

It is important, both for student and teacher, to think of learning as a means of discovery. Education, perhaps, is too much thought of today merely in terms of the acquisition of knowledge which the student is taught to analyze, to criticize, and to apply. We do not think enough about learning as a measure of intelligence or a gauge to the quality of thinking. After all, the qualities of mind and heart that the student manifests towards his work and the capacities that he reveals for accomplishment are more important than the quantity of knowledge acquired. The end of learning is scholarly habits, by which I mean ability to work with intensity, with patience, with thoroughness, and with eagerness. Rightly conceived, learning should reveal the qualities of integrity, the spirit of self-detachment, and an attitude of self-abnegation. These qualities should become the conscious possession and the attitude of mind of every student as he discovers his innate talents through the learning process.

Gnothi seauton, says Socrates, "know thyself." Ignorance of self is life's greatest handicap. Philosophers through the ages have been concerned with the problem of explaining the process by which
man discovers himself by knowing the world about him. The modern psychologists, irrespective of the school to which they adhere, have been primarily concerned with the methods of exploring the human mind. Intellectuals in all ages have sought a method, a technique, that would enable them to measure their own mental, physical, moral, and spiritual endowments. "Men and women," says Albert Edward Wiggam, "never needed psychology so much as they need it today, the young men and women need it in order to measure their own mental traits and capacities with a view to choosing their careers early and wisely." But this is only one of the reasons why they need it. They need it as a means of determining consciously the conditions of growth and their capacities for happiness and influence. "So much of our lives," says Will Durant, "is meaningless, a self-cancelling vacillation and futility; we strive with the chaos about us and within; but we would believe all the while that there is something vital and significant in us, could we but decipher our own souls." These words lay bare the secret tragedies in many lives. So much of our thinking is meaningless. There is so much of futility in our acts; while, at the same time, we are conscious "that there is so much that is vital and significant in us" which we do not seem to be able to turn to account. The learning process fostered in college should help us to know ourselves and to decipher the vital and significant things in our lives.

Socrates is reported to have given an exposition of the doctrine that we should know ourselves on one occasion. Xenophon in his Memoirs records a conversation between the philosopher and a rather conceited and sophisticated young man named Euthymenides, whom he was attempting to impress with this truth. Socrates used a striking analogy in his argument with this youth. He said:

But for a man to know himself well, it is not enough for him to know his own name; for a man that buys a horse, cannot be certain that he knows what he is, before he has ridden him, to see whether he is quiet or restive; whether he be maddened or dull, whether he be fleet or heavy; in short before he has made trial of all that is good or bad in him; in like manner, a man cannot say that he knows himself, before he has tried what he is fit for, and what he is able to do... For he who knows himself, knows likewise what is good for himself. He sees what he is able to do, and not able to do. By applying himself to things that he can do, he gets his bread with pleasure, and is happy; and by not attempting to do the things he cannot do, he avoids the danger of falling into errors, and of seeing himself miserable.

This striking plea of Socrates for discovery through learning is valid today. There is but one way to evaluate experiences, and that is through knowledge that gives exercise to all the faculties of the mind.

The Range of Human Experience

The essential reason for attending college is for the purpose of enlarging human experience under conditions where every mental and physical activity can be measured in terms of its consequences. There is no other place where the range of human experience is so wide or so varied. The home environment from which you have come is, as it should be a rather restricted environment. While it is not so restricted as it once was, by the very nature of things it is and always will be a limited environment. There is nothing so disastrous as a growing child as multiplying experiences faster than mental and physical growth warrant. Parents have no greater responsibility than that of restricting the child's activities to its ability to assimilate the enlarging environment in which it lives. The environment into which young people go after their college days are over will, also, be a restricted environment no matter under what conditions one lives or works. Business and professional life, perhaps, is not quite so restricted today as in the past, for a conscious effort has been made by community agencies to enlarge the interests and activities of the busy man with exacting duties and responsibilities. But, at best and by necessity, there is much of restriction in the lives lived by most people of mature years. University life has the advantage over the home environment and the environment of business and professional life in giving a wider range to individual interests. This has not always been true. Throughout the early history of higher education in this country, the college environment was in some respects more restricted than the early home environment. There was little place for social activities. There were few recreational opportunities, and athletics was unimportant and generally discouraged. But for the last half century this picture has been rapidly changing. Social and recreational activities have multiplied rapidly until today student life comprehends a range of interests to be found nowhere else in our social life. The fact is that our educational institutions have deliberately stimulated many of these activities as a means of vitalizing and intensifying the interests of students in order to test out human aptitudes and evaluate capacities and limitations.

While the range of human experience that this environment stimulates is its supreme claim for being, there are some perils involved in it. The larger freedom fostered here develops strength and power in those having capacities to utilize this freedom aright, but it is often disastrous to those who are deficient in the natural endowments for which such a life is intended. Every educator has learned from sad experience that college life is not intended for every one. Undoubtedly, there are those that are actually harmed by such an environment. Young people often come to college who have not made adequate preparation in high school. These always become administrative problems. But the number that does not possess the background of inheritance, formulated habits, and experience previous to enrolment in a college or university be calculated. The opportunity is far greater than the number that is deficient in subject-matter knowledge.

Just as the time comes in the life of the young bird in the nest when it must test the strength of its wings for flight, so is every student confronted with the necessity of testing every mental, physical, and moral quality for rational living. The other day, I found in the garden of my home a young bird that had made its way out of its nest and attempted to fly. But its wing feathers were not adequate to the task and it had fallen a helpless mass to the ground. That experience is duplicated thousands of times in nature. Strength and weakness, capacity and incapacity, courage and fear, confidence and a lack of confidence are physical and mental qualities that every living thing must cope with in the complicated process of living. Survival or destruction is often determined by them. The triumphs and the tragedies of life are predetermined by these characteristics. By the very conditions of college life, they are in daily evidence on every campus.

Wrong Notions of College Life

Even those who come to college with the strength of character and the knowledge to do acceptable work are often handicapped because of wrong notions of what is expected of them. I sometimes think that there is a conspiracy, unconscious, of course, between various elements in civic communities to keep students from getting off to a good start in college. Young people are great, dangers of following the urge to attend college because of secondary rather than primary considerations. The things you hear most about in the months preceding your entrance into college are usually secondary and relatively unimportant.

A conversation between a small group of mothers concerning their sons, who were away in college, was recently reproduced in one of our papers. One of them said to the others:

"My son graduates from college this spring but he has had a discouraging time in school. He went out for foot-
ball during his freshman year but was not physically strong enough to make the team. The next year he did his best to get on the baseball team but for some reason the coach did not use him. In his junior year he applied for dance manager but the committee, after trying him out, said that he was awkward and could never make a good dancer. There was nothing left for him in his senior year but the valedictory. He took that, but he feels the disgrace keenly.

There are actually some parents like that, but I imagine that most of your parents will not think you a failure if you make Phi Eta Sigma in your freshman year or Phi Beta Kappa in your senior year. I would not have you think that I regard physical exercise as unimportant. The actual fact is that the great majority of students give too little thought to keeping their bodies in good physical condition while in college. I would urge you to take systematic exercise daily; but, as some one has said, jumping at conclusions and running up bills cannot be classified as exercise. These are not the things to which I refer.

It is not surprising that students often get the wrong perspective of college life. It not infrequently happens that even before students actually enter college their thoughts are directed to irrelevant things, which mislead them and often cause a misdirection of effort rather than to essential things.

A few days ago, I read an advertisement in the Chicago Tribune, which illustrates the thought I have in mind. A large firm was making an appeal to prospective college girls to buy their college wardrobes at this store. As an incentive to visit the store, the management announced that several college graduates would be available to answer a number of "important" questions whose answers every girl should know. Some of the questions were as follows:

1. How can I make the most effective picture when I stand on the observation platform and wave goodbye to the boy I leave behind me?
2. How can I be sure my favorite sorority will rush me like mad?
3. What will make me look demure but devastating in my economics class?
4. When the football captain looks my way how can I snag him from under the nose of our hero-worshippers?
5. What can I do to convince my professor of my superior intelligence?
6. At a prom, how shall I go about acquiring a fraternity pin?
7. How, oh how, shall I have the grandest year I've ever had on the most limited allowance?

This advertisement was, no doubt, prepared by a specialist who is presumed to know the psychology of advertising. The author presumed that he was asking the questions that the college girl would be most interested in, and I am not entirely sure that he was not correct. I am afraid if I had been preparing these questions as a means of attracting prospective college girls to a particular store, I would not have rated high as an advertising specialist.

Some of you may be surprised to know that colleges and universities were not established for the purpose of enabling you to affiliate with a social fraternity. Some of you are probably under the impression that a college is intended primarily to provide a place where fraternal connections may be established. Let me remind you that a social fraternity is a congenial place for a group of students to live while attending college. While they have come to occupy an important place in the life of our larger colleges and universities, they are quite incidental to the primary purpose for which educational institutions were established. You are not to infer from this statement that I am antagonistic to Greek letter societies; but the fact that many students, while in college and even some college graduates over-emphasize their fraternal affiliations causes me to direct your attention to the proper place for social fraternities in college life. To the extent that social fraternities foster scholarship and promote high standards of conduct, they are important aids to educational endeavor; to the extent that they discourage scholarship and develop extravagant tastes, they are harmful. I urge you, therefore, to think of your fraternity connection in its proper relationship to the larger interests of the institution and to the student body as a whole.

Let it be understood, therefore, that your presence here is not primarily to make a Greek letter fraternity, become a social leader, gain prominence as an athlete, acquire a fraternity pin, or convince your professors of your superior intelligence. Some of these things are well enough in their way, but all of them are incidental to the supreme purpose of acquiring knowledge and through the acquisition of knowledge discovering what is best in your mentality.

DUAL ASPECT OF DISCOVERY

If learning, then, is the primary purpose of your being here, you should clearly conceive of its dual function. Every legitimate task before you should lead to new discoveries—discoveries of knowledge and discoveries of self. Learning has been defined as "the process whereby experiences are gained which function effectively in meeting new situations." It is quite obvious that a university community is not the only place where learning can be acquired, but it is the place where the entire setup is designed to give the range of experiences which will help one to "function effectively" when confronted with new and untried situations. Education, sometimes, is defined as the process of adapting oneself to his environment. An educational institution where the learning process is fostered is designed to provide exactly the character of experiences that one needs to give mastery over changing environmental conditions.

Every university worthy of the name attempts to set up standards by which we measure conduct and intellectual accomplishment. The ultimate ends were first formulated by the Greeks in terms of beauty, goodness, and truth. Beauty is the synthesis of art. Goodness is the synthesis of religion. Truth is the synthesis of science. A knowledge of form, proportion, and symmetry is essential to an appreciation of art. A knowledge of man's relation to God and his fellowmen is essential to an appreciation of religion. A knowledge of design in nature and the laws governing animate and inanimate matter is essential to an understanding of science. In final analysis, the supreme equation with which you are to work in all the courses and all the departments in this university may be formulated as follows:

Art + Science + Religion = Beauty + Truth + Goodness.

As far as human resources have made it possible, the university has been designed to typify this formula. This campus is one of the beauty spots of Oklahoma. Every tree, shrub and flower has been planted with loving care in a way to promote a sense of the beautiful and to harmonize with every other object about them. The buildings and equipment, as far as resources will permit, have been designed to create a love for truth and appreciation for goodness. You are invited to utilize these resources for what the Greeks designated as the sumnum bonum which they never ceased to search for at the height of their glory and which we are to search for as we struggle upward toward the levels of the highest accomplishment.

Let us think of our progress toward an appreciation of art, the exemplification of goodness, and the conquest of truth in terms of achievement. One of the greatest social philosophers that America has produced and a former professor of mine, the late Dr. Albion W. Small of the University of Chicago, classified these achievements as follows:

1. Achievement in Promoting Health
2. Achievement in Producing Wealth
3. Achievement in Harmonizing Human Relations
4. Achievement in Discovery and Spread of Knowledge
5. Achievement in the Fine Arts
6. Achievement in Religion.

(TURN TO PAGE 57, PLEASE)
BOWMAN-RULE: Miss Margaret Bowman, '31ex, and James Landon Rule, August 26 in Oklahoma City. Home, Hobart.


BRIGHT-RIDDLE: Miss Mary Ruth Bright, '32ex, and Hubert Riddle, September 6 in Norman. Home, Joplin, Kansas.


ESTUS-BARNES: Miss Margaret Corrine Estus, and Clarence Ernest Barnes, 27ex, July 29 in Oklahoma City. Sigma Nu. Home, 502 East Harrison avenue, Guthrie.


LINTHICUM-HESTER: Miss Emogene Linthicum, '31ex, and Norman Ezra Hester, August 10 in Hugo. Home, Poteau.

MORGAN-FLINN: Miss Mildred Morgan, '30ex, and James W. Flinn, July 10 in Stillwater. Home, 1513 West 18th, Oklahoma City.

WHITE-WOFFORD: Miss Irene White, '26ex, and Denver Wofford, July 2 in Oklahoma City. Home, Oklahoma City.

MONKNEY-HARRISON: Miss Margaret Montney, '33as, and Dr. Frank Harbison, October 4. Phi Beta Phi. Home, Oklahoma City.

TUTTLE-CLAY: Miss Ethel Lee Tuttle, '29ex, and John McClay, September 30 in Guthrie. Home, Oklahoma City.

BIRTHS

J. Hamilton Green, '28as, and Mrs Green, a son, Edward Hugh, August 4, Home, Ardmore.

Mrs Vivian Custard Milburn, '31as, and George Milburn, a daughter, Janet. Home, Yankton, New York.

DEATHS

G. Lee Gibbs

G. Lee Gibbs, '27aw, died September 16 of pneumonia in a hospital in Oklahoma City. After graduating from the university Mr Gibbs was affiliated with the law firm of Twyford & Smith of Oklahoma City.

DISCOVERY AND LEARNING

(continued from page 42)

Education, in the large, is concerned with achievement—achievement in all of these realms of human endeavor. Life is lived at the highest level by those who have achieved high rating in all of these. But few of us ever have our lives enriched by the conquests of all these aspects of learning. It is not infrequently happens that the wealthy man is frail physically. The scholar—the man of learning—is often a social recluse, the artist is frequently too subjective to be human, and the devout man of God is often prejudiced against knowledge. Learning, therefore, as a function of ed-

This is Neil Nettleton, son of Mr Tuly A. Nettleton, '23 B.A., and Mrs Ruth S. Nettleton, 26 B.A., of Newton Centre, Massachusetts. According to Mrs Nettleton young Neil keeps his father hard at work as a member of the editorial staff of "The Christian Science Monitor," Boston, and is worth it.
ucation, is the process by which every life is preempted of all its capacities in the attainment of beauty, goodness, and truth.

When I think of education in these terms, I find it difficult to be tolerant with the student who is indifferent to his educational opportunities and who is willing to trifle away his time in the midst of such an environment. I am equally intolerant of the college professor who uses the precious hours assigned to class room instruction in profitless discussion of irrelevant subjects. Lord Chesterfield was right when he said in one of his letters to his son while a student at Leipzig that "every moment you now lose is so much character and advantage lost; on the other hand, every moment you now employ usefully, is so much time wisely laid out, at prodigious interest." The period is relatively short for acquiring a college education and the time should be utilized in the most profitable ways.

CONCLUSION

My remarks have been predicated on the theory that all of you are young intellectuals who are now interested in being discovered-discovered for a purpose. Learning is not an end in itself. The acquisition of knowledge is not even the end of learning. There is a more important objective. All the knowledge that may be acquired through the learning process should be utilized for the purpose of self-evaluation.

The university is a great focus for testing life from all angles. Just as the Olympic games at Los Angeles this summer tested the relative skill and endurance of the greatest athletes of the world, likewise every educational institution is an intellectual marathon where students are daily testing out their relative intellectual, moral, physical, and spiritual qualities. It is in this environment that you have the opportunity of measuring yourselves in relation to the outer world of material objects or the inner world of thought and emotion. Learning in this sense should become exhilarating and an alluring adventure into self-consciousness. You will find that it has its hazards as well as its conquests, but for those with courage, initiative, and perseverance the hazards are negligible and the rewards are indescribably great.

The supreme need of the times is men and women with will power to do right and resist wrong, to think clearly and to act wisely, and to respect the rights of others as they expect others to respect their rights. There is no better place in the world to acquire these supreme qualities than in an environment of this kind. An "intelligent ordering of experience," to use a phrase of James Truslow Adams, is both a duty and an opportunity.
"You do not educate a man by telling him what he knew not," says John Ruskin, "but by making him what he was not." This is another way of saying that every man should so direct his experiences that right conduct will be the natural result of right thinking. The university will not do enough for you or you will not get enough out of your experiences here unless this ideal is realized.

Finally, let me remind you that this will be a critical year in the history of the university. The existence of the institution depends entirely upon the goodwill of the citizenship of this state. As you know, people everywhere have been suffering great financial hardships and they have been experiencing great anxieties. A psychological state of mind like this tends to cause men to lose a sense of relative values. At this moment the determination of the American people to reduce the cost of government is likely to result in the automatic reduction of expenditures, irrespective of how it may affect public welfare or the future of our civilization. You can do much this year to prevent disaster coming to the university. There are many of our people who honestly believe that many students who come to our institutions of higher learning do not profit by the advantages that have been provided for them. You alone can discredit this popular belief by making the most of your opportunities this year. Idleness and indifference are always to be discouraged, not only in college but out of it; but the time has come when indifference to the serious purposes of education cannot be tolerated. You are to see to it that nothing occurs during this year that will bring reproach upon the good name of the student body or the institution that nurtures you.

Let us, therefore, as we learn, receive, and hear, give preference in our lives to the things that are true, the things that are honest, the things that are just, and the things that are pure to the end that happiness to you and satisfaction and pride to those that sent you here may result from this year's work.

University of Oklahoma Press
Norman

The Sooner Magazine

November

FOLK-SAY IV is a cross section of provincial America. Twenty-nine contributors have painted a portrait of America in transition, a portrait vivid in colors of earth, bold in folk humor and poetic passion, rich in the contrasts and ironies of an agricultural society in process of industrialization.

Like the three preceding volumes, FOLK-SAY IV is a transcription of the aspirations of the folk in varying stages of becoming literature.

Kenneth Kaufman says in the Daily Oklahoman: "While FOLK-SAY IV may jar our smugness, it is likely to attract, through its critical sophistication, much more favorable comment from eastern critics than the preceding issues.... FOLK-SAY, more truly than any other published expression of our national consciousness, is America."

FOLK-SAY IV, The Land Is Ours, October. Title page and decorations by Paul Horgan. 304 pages. Published October 15. Price $3.00.

FOLK-SAY IV, A transcription of the aspirations of the folk in varying stages of becoming literature.

FOLK-SAY IV may jar our smugness, it is likely to attract, through its critical sophistication, much more favorable comment from eastern critics than the preceding issues.... FOLK-SAY, more truly than any other published expression of our national consciousness, is America.

Grades were compiled on the basis of three points for each hour of A, two points for B, one point for C, no points for D, minus one point for E, and minus two points for F. The fraternities ranked as follows: