Prehistoric Times

Little is known about higher education during the Stone Age, which is perhaps just as well.

Because of a weakness in the liberal arts, the B.A. was not offered, and there was only the B.S., or Bachelor of Stones. Laboratory facilities were meager, owing to a lack of government contracts and support from private industry, but the stars were readily available, on clear nights, for those interested in astronomy. (Scholars, who went around without much on, looked at the stars with the naked eye.)

Prehistoric students, being before history, failed to comprehend the fundamentals of the subject, such as its being divided into Ancient, Medieval, and Modern.

There were no College Boards. This was fortunate, because without saw or plane, boards were rough.

Nor were there any fraternities. The only clubs on the campus were those carried by the students or, in self-defense, by members of the faculty.

Alumni organizations were in their infancy, where some of them have remained. The alumni secretary occupied a small cave, left behind when the director of development moved to a larger one. While waiting for contributions to come in, he idly doodled on the wall, completely unaware that art critics would someday mistake his drawings of certain members of the board of trustees for dinosaurs and saber-toothed tigers.

The Alumni Quarterly came out every quarter of a century, and was as eagerly awaited as it is today.

The Classical Period

In ancient Athens everyone knew Greek, and in ancient Rome everyone knew Latin, even small children—which those who have taken Elementary Greek or Elementary Latin will find hard to believe. Universities wishing to teach a language which had little practical use but was good for mental discipline could have offered English if they had thought of it.

Buildings were all in the classical style, and what looked like genuine marble was genuine marble. However, philosophy classes were sometimes held on the steps, the students being so eager to learn that they couldn't wait to get inside.

The Peripatetic School was a college where the professors kept moving from town to town, closely followed by students and creditors. Sometimes lectures were held in the Groves of Academe, where students could munch apples and olives and occasionally cast an anxious eye at birds in the branches overhead.

Under the Caesars, taxation became so burdensome that Romans in the upper brackets found they might as well give money to their Alma Mater instead of letting the State have it. Thus it was that crowds often gathered along the Appian Way to applaud a spirited chariot race between the chairman of the funds drive and the tax collector, each trying to get to a good prospect first.

The word "donor" comes from the Latin donare, to give, and is not to be confused with duname, to dun, though it frequently is.

When a prominent alumnus was thrown to the lions, customary procedure in the alumni office was to observe a moment of silence, broken only by the sound of munching. Then the secretary, wrapping his toga...
a little more tightly around him, solemnly declared, "Well, we might as well take him off the cultivation list."

The Middle Ages

In the period known as the Dark Ages, or nighthood, everyone was in the dark. Higher education survived only because of illuminated manuscripts, which were discovered during a routine burning of a library. It is interesting to reconstruct a typical classroom scene: a group of dedicated students clustered around a glowing piece of parchment, listening to a lecture in Advanced Monasticism, a ten-year course.

Some left even sooner, before the end of the lecture, having spied a beautiful damsel being pursued by a dragon who had designs on her. Damsels, who were invariably in distress, wrought havoc on a young man's grade-point average. Members of the faculty were better off than previously, because they wore coats of armor. Fully accoutered, and with their visors down, they could summon up enough courage to go into the president's office and ask for a promotion even though they had not published a thing.

At this time the alumni council became more aggressive in its fund drives, using such persuasive devices as the thumbscrew, the knout, and the wheel. A wealthy alumnus would usually donate generously if a sufficient number of alumni, armed with pikestaffs and halberds, could cross his moat and storm his castle walls. A few could be counted on to survive the rain of stones, arrows, and molten lead. Such a group of alumni, known as "the committee," was customarily conducted to the castle by a troubador, who led in the singing of the Alma Mater Song the while.

The Renaissance

During the Renaissance, universities sprang up all over Europe. You could go to bed at night, with not a university around, and the next morning there would be two universities right down the street, each with a faculty, student body, campanile, and need for addition endowment. The first universities were in Italy, where Dante was required reading. Some students said his "Paradise" and "Purgatory" were as hard as "Hell." Boccaccio was not required but was read anyhow, and in the original Italian, so much being lost in translation. Other institutions soon followed, such as Heidelberg, where a popular elective was Duelling 103a,b, usually taken concurrently with First Aid, and the Sorbonne, which never seemed to catch on with tourists as much as the Eiffel Tower, the Folies Bergere, and Napoleon's Tomb. In England there was Oxford, where, by curious coincidence, all of the young instructors were named Don. There was also Cambridge.

The important thing about the Renaissance, which was a time of awakening
A SHORT HISTORY OF EDUCATION

"the first alumni publication was probably Poor Alumnus' Almanac"

A SHORT HISTORY OF EDUCATION

"the first alumni publication was probably Poor Alumnus' Almanac"