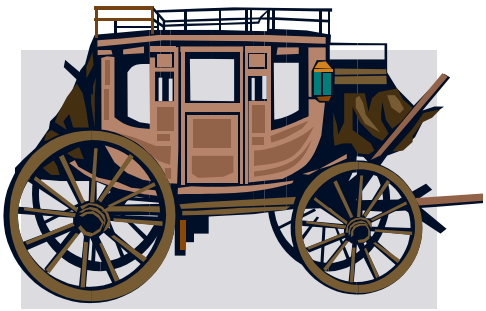
RECOLLECTIONS



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By

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(1912 –1991)

Albuquerque, New Mexico

From his unpublished hand-typed chapters

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> Thank you! I have read into his first days of class and the thing that was fun for me is the fact that my brothers and I have a Whippet car in storage, built in 1929 :) My father was a collector of many things. I can picture that steamer trunk on top of it! Fascinating story and cannot wait to finish it! I have got many sections highlighted in my mind to share with the College class; obviously, the whole document could not share. It has so much historical significance that any student willing to put the time in to read it would enjoy it. I really like Jack's writing style. - Blessings, Linda Stewart – College Age Sunday School teacher (2010)

CHAPTER 3 - COLLEGE YEARS

During 1930 through 1933, I attended the Indiana State Teachers College, now Indiana State University, at Terra Haute, Indiana. The only reasons for writing this chapter were the insights about college years during the Great Depression. Forty years later when I was on the staff at the University of New Mexico, I saw that the experiences of most students were the same, although each feels that his or her college years were unique.

When I started into high school in 1926, the family tacitly assumed that I would continue through college, although there was no first indication as to how this could be accomplished. There were never any economic preparations. There was no bank account, we had no substantial equity in our home, and each week's paycheck was totally consumed. The assumption was, therefore, that I would work my way in some fashion.

It was assumed that one went to college for a specific type of career preparation, to become a teacher or a lawyer or a doctor or an engineer. It was not believed, at least among the people we knew, that any college education was required to become a shop superintendent, an insurance man, a grocer, a hotel owner, or a banker.

Figure 1 – High School Senior – 6/1930

In high school, there were general groups of courses available. One could take a vocational course, or business course, or a college prep course, and I took the latter from the start. That included two years of language (Spanish), three years of mathematics, four years of history, two years of science, and four years of English.

When I graduated at Fort Wayne Central High School in June 1930, I had a one-year tuition scholarship at Indiana University extension. Under this arrangement, professors from Indiana University at Bloomington came up to Fort Wayne to teach evening classes, held at Central High. This meant that a first year student could live at home, attend classes in the evening, and study during the day. For the second year, the student attended the university itself, but the first year's cost of room and board could be saved.

Mentors

After leaving high school, I worked at the Fort Wayne area Boy Scout camp at Limberlost, the former estate of the writer Gene Stratton Porter, on Lake Wawasee in northeastern Indiana. I was a low-paid assistant or counselor at a Boy Scout camp, earning three or four dollars a week. My post was that of camp adjutant, whose principal duty was keeping enrollment records and acting as a routine assistant to the men who ran the camp. Among the adult leaders, two men most affected my future.

One of these was Robert Fink, whom I admired and emulated for about four previous summers at Scout camp. He was then at an eastern college majoring in Latin and Greek, and that summer, he was reading books on the German language. I asked him why he studied German when his major was Latin and Greek. He replied that many useful books about Latin and Greek were written in German. This impressed me hugely. Imagine going that deep into scholarship.

Bob made one remark that summer that stayed with me all my life.

> He said, "*Remember, there is nothing you can't do, nothing you can't achieve, if you are willing to pay the price. That price may be hard work, very hard. It may mean that you will have to give up some friends, some pleasures, and some interests. You may have to give up a great deal. It is up to you to decide whether or not the goal is worth the price."*

Bob read widely. He urged me to read Arnold Bennett's ***Old Wives' Tale***, and gave me a copy. I do not now consider that an especially great book, but it introduced me to the school of heavy English novels that summer.

I learned thirty years later that Bob became a professor of classical languages at Kenyon College in Ohio, but I never saw him after the summer of 1930. If I had, my decisions might be far different at many forks in the road. No [mentor] quite like him ever came along, even when I hunted for someone.

Finding a College

The other man who diverted my stream of life was Byron McCammon, who was a teacher in an elementary school in Fort Wayne and an active Boy Scout leader. He did not affect my goals in life, but he was instrumental in my going to Terre Haute to the college, and on only that one point did he change my career. "Mac" came from southern Indiana. When the Boy Scout camp sessions ended in late July, Mac said he was going

down to Terre Haute on a motor trip and would welcome my company to visit his alma mater, Indiana State Teachers College, formerly the Indiana State Normal School.

So I went along, and he showed me around the town and the campus. I dropped the plan of staying at home in Fort Wayne and attending evening classes, and instead I would go away to a real college. As I look back on it now, that was a very casual way to choose a school.

I visited no other colleges, studied no other catalogs, but simply picked the first one that came along. It was not entirely a chance selection with my two optional careers in mind. One was to become a Boy Scout executive and the other was to become a high school teacher of history and/or English. Either way, a teachers' college was indicated. Nearly all of the students I met later chose a specific career goal, a specific job for training. These were not simply "teaching," for instance, but were to teach English, biology, or some definite subject.

This was in August, when things were fairly slow on campus. I saved no money for college, and my parents had no money. Mac told me that many of the Indiana State students worked their way, and that I should find some small job that could pay my room rent and some other sort of work that could provide meals. He took me to a rooming house to see what costs would be. He advised me to arrive in Terre Haute during late August when most students were away and more jobs would be available.

The college had no frills. It started as Indiana, Normal School, later became Indiana State Teachers College (there was another similar college at Muncie, Indiana, known then as Ball State Teachers College), and finally it became Indiana State University, but that was after my time. Terre Haute was then a town of about sixty-five thousand.

Naturally, I was quite impressed with the college, as it was my first. It was far behind a modern school [even] in 1930 with 1500 to 2000 students [and few buildings.]

There was one ancient main building for most liberal arts subjects, a science building, a library, and a mechanical arts building. There was one dormitory for girls and a gymnasium. There was no men's dormitory, no student center, no football field, no administration building, no cafeteria, and few fripperies.

I will not here repeat a [common college] story. Much, if not most of what I did, is done the same way today: classroom lectures, terms papers, examinations, dates, dances, bull sessions, trips to other colleges, homecoming, football games, club activities, and so on. Only the names would differ.

What was different was the way I made it through my three years, although there were young men in the hundreds of thousands who made it the same way then and some still doing so. What was different was what I got out of college and what I did not get out of it, for each person's mixture here is a little different.

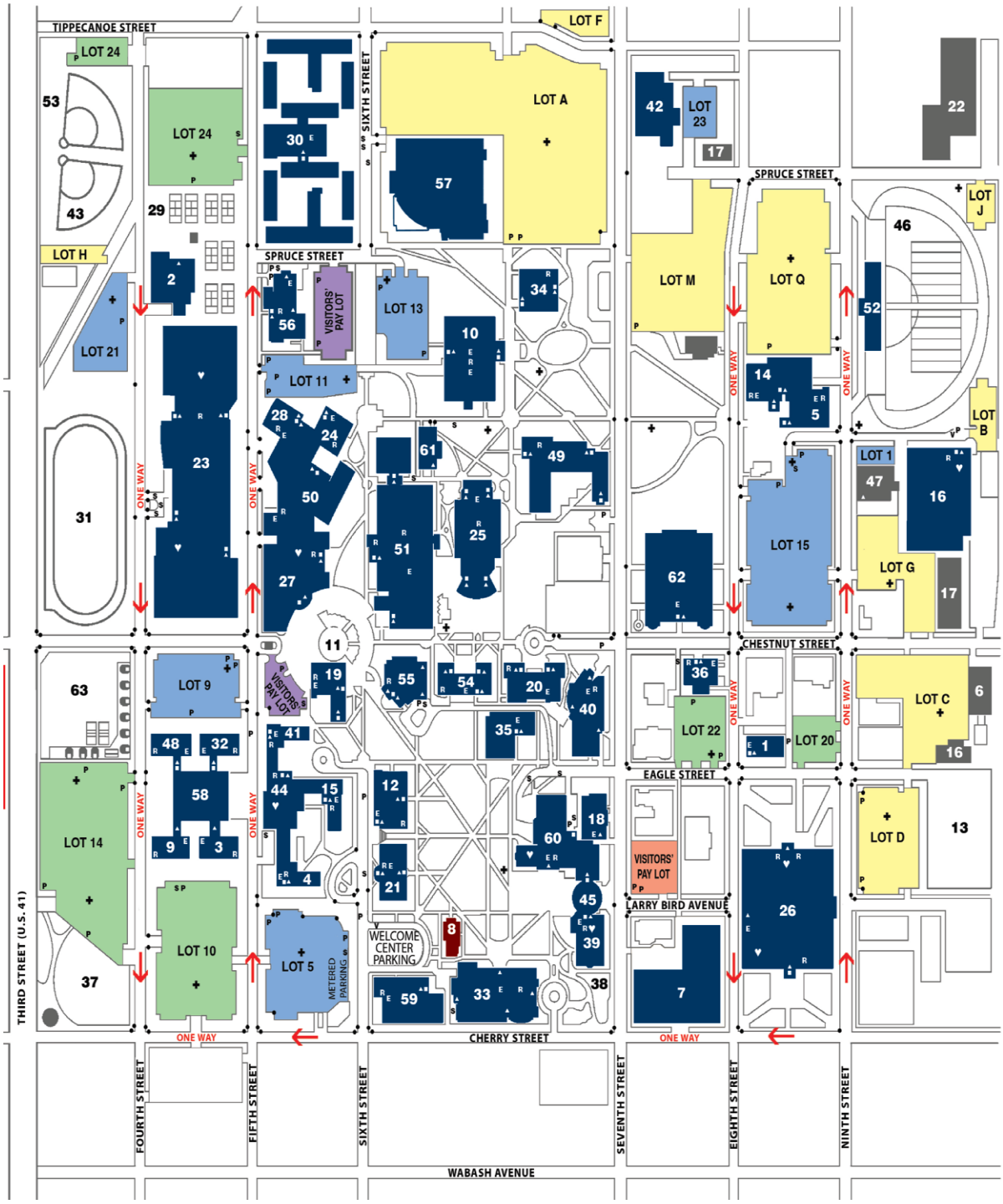


Figure 2 - Indian State University - 2010

My friend took me to visit a few teachers and administrative officials, by way of introduction, although later this meant little. The men at the college who did not live with their families in town lived at approved rooming houses, and my friend introduced me to Mrs. Van Horn, who ran the old house where he stayed. He suggested that I might try for a job in a restaurant or carrying newspapers, as a way of earning some money.

The college year consisted of four twelve-week terms. This allowed teachers in primary or high schools a chance to come back during the summer for a twelve-week term of work toward a higher degree. It allowed for complete closing of the college during the month of September. I moved to Terre Haute immediately, arriving there in early September [anticipating] less competition in seeking some work.

Therefore, I went back home and told my parents about my choice. They did not attempt to dissuade me, and in general approved the idea. We packed up my clothes and books, and the whole family went along in our old Whippet motorcar, with my steamer trunk (ancestor of the modern footlocker) lashed to the top for the l80 miles trip.

We made it down in one day, and the folks returned the next. Mother gave me twenty-five dollars, in addition to a few that I left from working at Scout camp, and Dad said, "*I wish we could give you more.*" Then they drove back, because Dad could take only Saturday and Sunday away from his job at the Tokheim plant. I was completely on my own. Thus began the first major change in my life, one of those occasions on which I seemed to close a door behind me and enter a whole new period of my existence.

Figure 3 – 1929 Whippet Motor Car (L.Stewart)

Terre Haute was in the soft or bituminous coal region of southern Indiana and southern Illinois. Its only major local industrial plant was a Libby-Owens glass plant that made Coca Cola bottles. It was on the east bank of the Wabash River, and Paul Dresser was its most noted literary figure. In early days, it was a trading post for trappers and settlers.

The college had only a few buildings. Largest was the old main building, built of red brick, I would judge, in the 1880s. It occupied the end of a city block, at the other end of which was the local public library, and in between was a former residence used for

meetings of various college clubs and societies. College buildings occupied the two east-west streets that flanked this block. On one side were the girls' dormitory and a vocational building. On the other street sat the science building, the library, and the gymnasium. That was the whole establishment.

Finding a Place to Live

A very large portion of the students came from local families. Girls from out of town stayed at the girls' dormitory. Out of town men students lived in rooming houses, which must be on a list approved by the dean of men. I stayed with a Mrs.Van Horn, and McCammon introduced me to her on my first visit.

This rooming house was a two-story wooden family residence. Mr. and Mrs. Van Horn lived downstairs. Upstairs had three bedrooms on one side of a hall and two more bedrooms on the other side, with a bathroom in between the latter two. In front was one small room, about eight by eight feet, for one student.

The five larger rooms for students each held two young men. There was one double bed, one dresser with three or four drawers, two small kitchen tables, and two wooden straight chairs, and a small closet.

The rent was two dollars per week per person. This was more or less the standard rate then. The landlady came through the rooms every day to straighten things up and, at intervals, change the bed linens, but did not render full maid services. There were many such rooming houses along North Sixth Street then, but only one provided meals as a true "boarding house."

My room was about seven by eight feet, furnished with an iron cot, a chest of drawers, one chair, and a small wooden table about the size of a card table. One bath served five rooms; the other four rooms held two boys each.

Two dollars a week may seem very little to pay for lodging; but in 1930 to 1933, it was not "little." I was told that in the early 1930s, the young women, who clerked in dime stores along the main street, worked a full week for three to four dollars.

Finding a Job

My first goal was to find a job. With unemployed, experienced full-grown men seeking work, finding a student job was not easy. This was the Hoover era; Roosevelt did not take office until midway through my junior year.

I was three months short of my eighteenth birthday, stood about five feet ten and a half inches tall, and weighed a hundred and forty pounds. My hair, tinged enough with red to classify me as a redhead, was not a flaming red. I was more lanky than muscular.

A regular, wage-paying job was not available, such as working in a gasoline service station, garage, or as a taxi driver, store clerk, salesman, factory hand, watchman. I do not know a single student who held such a job.

The first job I landed was as a newspaper route carrier for the **Terre Haute Star**, a morning paper. I rode a bicycle through a residential working class area in the southwestern part of town, with 125 home subscribers. I spent about fifteen dollars for an old single-speed bike and kept this job for about a month or two. The boy with the route before me barely collected enough to pay for his papers. The arrangement was that I would turn over to him all money collected on back debts but could keep all current collections for myself. After two weeks, I this was a losing proposition. In flush times, there had been 200 subscribers, and the newspaper circulation manager required me to buy 200 copies. My loss on these extra copies, together with non-payment by people out of work, left me with barely enough to pay my room rent and often not that much.

I got a job in a side street cafe, washing dishes and mopping the floors. I was not then experienced enough to be a waiter, for that was a "regular" job that usually went to an adult. The custom then was to work three hours every evening in return for three meals a day. The restaurants were all open seven days a week.

After I arrived in Terre Haute, began my lodgings at the Van Horns', and started my restaurant work and paper route, there were still five or six weeks before classes began. I had to earn some cash money for tuition, books, and other expenses.

Ship Models

I rode my bicycle one afternoon out into the countryside and sat under a tree to consider some possibilities. The one idea with merit was to build and sell decorative ship models. I built three or four such models while in high school and knew how to do it.

In my Boy Scout work, I met several businessmen back in Fort Wayne: a banker, the head of an insurance company, the head of the Telephone Company, etc. Perhaps one of those might be willing to pay for a ship model that could grace his office or mantel.

At first my plan was to build one model of the famous clipper ship "Flying Cloud ". When I started, I could build two of the same models simultaneously without much more work, because a great deal of time at each step was spent in deciding which part to make next, finding the proper bit of material, measuring it, and getting out the proper tools. Once that work was done, making two pieces took little more total time than making one.

I was then living in the small eight by eight foot room at Van Horn's, because there were few summer students there and I had no roommate. Therefore, I sat at my "desk" (kitchen table) by the window all day working on the two models, after running the paper route in the morning and before my early evening stint at the cafe.

I soon sold the bicycle after making one hard round of collections that gave me a little extra money, gave up the paper route, and settled down to making my ships. Arising at six to get full advantage of daylight, I worked steadily, putting in about 80 hours a week on the models, plus my work at the restaurant.

Figure 4 - Flying Cloud (britannica.com)

Try to imagine the primitive way ship modelers worked in 1930. I started with white pine boards one inch thick and glued them in layers to make the hull, shaping it with a pocketknife. Masts and spars were made of dowels, tapered to fit. The dime store was ransacked for silk thread, knitting needles, toothpicks, beads, wooden matchboxes, corks, and any small trinket box made of thin wood that could be used for lumber.

I used linen thread for the rigging, and an assortment of other materials such as celluloid knitting needles, tiny straight pins known as "ribbon pins," less than half an inch long, and a penknife. The "deadeyes" of ship's rigging, for instance, were made by slicing pieces off a celluloid knitting needle, much as one slices bologna. A sewing needle was stuck in a cork, heated over a candle, and holes burned through the tiny slice of celluloid. Balsa wood, model airplane glue, Exacto knives, etc., were unknown in 1930, although in the Boy Scouts I made model airplane glue by dissolving a fragmented white celluloid comb in a few ounces of acetone from a druggist, producing cellulose acetate glue.

I had excellent plans and good guides, for ship modeling was then in its heyday, and writers such as Captain C. Armitage McCann turned out good step-by-step articles and plans in Popular Science Monthly.

Working steadily, I completed my two models and took them back to Fort Wayne on a trip. I sold then both to businessmen who actively supported the Boy Scouts. One went to E. Hoffman, a bank official, and the other to an executive with the telephone company. They sold for twenty-five dollars each.

I called on Arthur Hall, founder of the Lincoln National Life Insurance Company, headquartered in Fort Wayne. He offered to buy a model of the “USS Constitution" for seventy-five dollars, which I built in my freshman year.

Figure 5 - USS Constitution in the 1930’s (Robert Hurst, navsource.org)

When that model was done, Mr. Hall sent pictures of it to some of his friends, one of whom, a prominent construction man in New York City, a Mr. Hegemann, who asked me to build a model of Hendrick Hudson's "Half Moon" about fifteen inches long, to put with a collection of ship models he donated to an eastern college or school, I think it was at Andover. The chain of sales ran out, and I built no more models while in college.

Figure 6 – Home Office, Lincoln National Life, Fort Wayne (H. Briley 6/2016)

[The home office was a half block from the corner of Lewis and Calhoun and easily seen from Central High School windows or from the Lewis Street trolley.]

First Day of Classes

It was time for the opening of classes. Indiana State operated on a trimester system, or rather a quarterly plan, which was very sensible. The first 12-week term ran through October-November-December, the second ran through January-February-March, and the third ran April-May-June. This was followed by a summer schedule occupying July and August. All classes were suspended during September. The content of each course was the same as if it was for a full school year of nine months, but was broken into three sections instead of two. The plan allowed four quarters of about twelve weeks each, and this meant that some courses could be given in the summer term for those schoolteachers out in the field who wanted summer courses leading to an additional degree.

In 1930, the college served about 2200 students with summer students, so there were probably 1500 regular students during the standard school year. When the regular term opened, I acquired a roommate, a farm boy from Attica, Indiana, named Dallas Parks. We moved into a large back room. He was a freshman like me.

There was discipline and formality. In classes, men students were addressed as "Mister" and women students were addressed as "Miss." There were certain traditions we followed as freshmen. For example, we never used the main entrance of the main building but were to use only the side doors.

We wore on campus at all times a small green skull cap called a "beanie." When an upperclassman shouted "Button!" we touched the button at the top of the cap with the tip of one finger. Fraternity men and athletes (letter men) often carried small paddles to administer punishment on the spot if one did not move fast enough. A few sadists on campus delighted in shouting "*Button! Both hands!*" This meant simply dropping one's books on the ground and using a finger of each hand. I saw one group doing this to freshmen as they crossed a shallow puddle, causing the books to fall into the water.

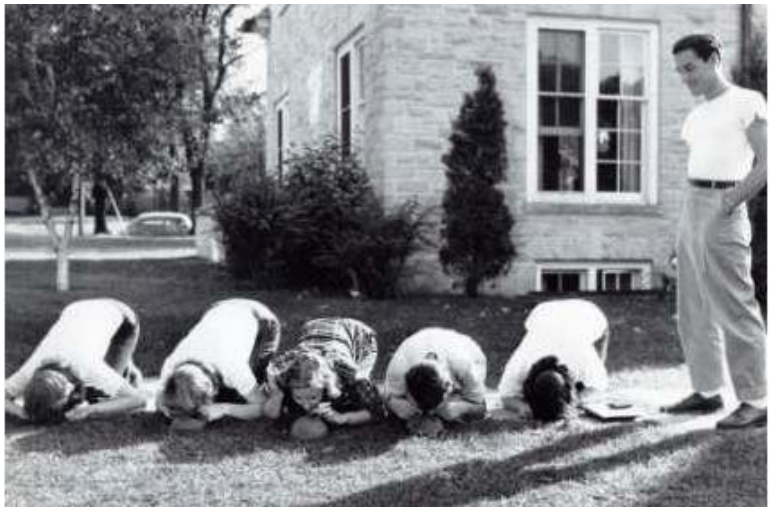


Figure 7 - Typical Freshman hazing - 1948 (ripon.edu)

"Freshman women kiss their green beanies at the approach of an upper-classman."

A class session lasted fifty minutes, allowing ten minutes to get to the next class, and a course with "four hours" credit meant that one attended that class four days each week. It was assumed that two hours of study occurred for each hour in class. Thus, a standard course load of sixteen credit hours meant a total of forty-eight hours work in a week.

Tuition was very low. Tuition was free if one signed an agreement to teach in the schools of Indiana for two years after graduation, and I agreed to do that. Each student paid a fee of $15.50 per quarter for various other costs such as medical service, library, concerts, sports, the college newspaper, etc. Later, with few teaching jobs open in the state to absorb all graduates, the plan of free tuition was dropped.

On registration day, the incoming freshmen gathered, in the gymnasium. We sat on the floor to fill out various forms; there was no suitable room large enough anywhere on campus. One of the forms was a long I.Q. Test. I do not know how well I did but felt that I was a little above the median. Some of the problems involved new forms of writing and at least one of them was not wholly new to me.

I signed up for a course that led to a degree of Bachelor of Arts in Education or Bachelor of Science in Education. My majors were English and Social Studies, the latter including history, economics, political science, and sociology.

The usual college classes did not much differ from high school, as far as teaching was concerned. There were the usual lectures, term papers, tests, and grades. I have no transcript, and none of my report cards were among my souvenirs. No courses were exotic; just the good, basic subjects. I had a year of Spanish to the two done in high school, two years of French, several in English and history, a year of botany, none in mathematics, and courses in economics, sociology, political science, introduction to education (teaching), and psychology.

Freshman-Sophomore Fight

Toward the end of the first quarter, the usual Home coming Day was observed. One important event for freshmen was the freshman-sophomore fight. This became such a violent affair that I heard it was cancelled shortly after I left the school.

The fight was held in a roped-off area on the campus, about a hundred feet square. In the center was erected the stub of a telephone pole, its top cut off flat about nine feet above the ground. Into its top a socket was drilled and a length of one-inch pipe, perhaps seven feet long, was inserted. Strips of cloth in school colors were tied to the top. The pole was then smeared liberally with thick auto grease; the flat top of the post was kept dry.

The fight may have lasted only a half hour; it seemed much longer. All of the freshmen men assembled in one corner; the sophomores were in a diagonally opposite corner. The required costume included shirt, trousers, undershorts, belt, socks, and tennis or gym shoes. The shirt and trousers were to be some that you did not mind having torn to bits.

The objective of the freshmen was to scale the pole and bring town the colors, but this was never achieved in the history of the affair. The sophomores simply defended the colors, and one sophomore was stationed atop the wooden pole, dressed in boxing or track shorts, with tennis shoes on his feet and with his legs liberally greased. He clung to the length of pipe.

Members of "the football squad acted as "coaches" and referees; they were armed with fraternity paddles, and their object was to see that no one lagged back but followed the rule of "get in there and fight!" No blows with the fist were permitted or any outright kicking or eye gouging. You could butt with the head, use your elbow, or use any wrestling hold, and you could push, pull, shove, or seize any man in any way. The freshmen wore some sort of colored strip to indicate which group was which.

The fight was in three or four "rounds" of a few minutes each, with intermissions in which the groups retired to their corners to catch their breath.

The sophomores, in preceding years, often scouted the gym classes to spot the most rugged freshmen who might gain a victory. The night before the fight, sophomores often spirited these possible champions away, so they could not be present for the fight. One simple method was to kidnap the fellow and drive him twenty miles or so away to a lonely farm road, so he could not walk back in time. Some were locked in freight cars or in silos. Members of the football squad often gave the sophomores a hand.

I sometimes know boys or men whom I disliked from the start, and the feeling was usually mutual. I could never explain this. The term "bad vibes" or "bad psychic vibrations" describe this. I knew one such boy in high school, but there was a menacing hostility between us before we ever spoke, and I had never seen him before nor heard about him by reputation. I had one such encounter at college with a fellow called "'Doc" Melton, a year or two ahead of me. We had no discussions, no arguments, the barest of contacts, but we knew hostility there. The day before the freshman-sophomore fight, he came up and said, "*You better be at the fight tomorrow, Red."*

That night the football squad ate a pre-game dinner together at the cafe where I worked. Doc Melton was with them, and he saw me coming and going as I cleared away the dishes and worked in the kitchen. Later I saw him talking to some of the athletes and nodding back toward the kitchen. When the squad left the cafe, several, including Doc, hung around on the sidewalk outside. It was closing time, and I suspected they were waiting for me. I turned out all of the lights, locked the cafe door, went into the back storeroom, and lay down to sleep on a pile of boxes. They were not in sight the next morning when I awakened. I went to my rooming house and was told that Doc was there asking for me. I changed clothes and went to the "ring."

Doc was there, and in the first rush for the pole he came upon me from behind and threw his arm around my head. I was always susceptible to nosebleeds then, and Doc tapped the claret for sure. It did not bother me but must have looked terrible, for in a few minutes I was streaked with blood, black grease, and dust. I do not know what happened

to Doc. He never got between me and the pole, and perhaps the "referees" warned him away, as he was a junior. We never again met on campus.

I suffered no injuries; we did not bring down the colors, but we put up a good scramble. After this annual fight, the freshmen were admitted to society; we did not have to wear our little green caps, or make the "button" obeisance, and we could enter through the main door as we wished.

Athletic Requirements

I did not go out much for athletics. No student could graduate and receive a teacher's license without swimming, and a swimming test was given to all freshmen. We met at the YMCA pool several blocks away, a cheerless, cold affair. We lined up at one end of the pool and at the command dove in and swam to the other end. Those who made it, including myself, were given credit for the course and dismissed; those who failed had to take the full course during that quarter.

Another introductory gym class, called "orientation in physical education," gave a sampling of many sports so that students could choose the one they liked. Many freshmen from small towns or farm centers had known basketball and football, but it was quite a new thing to try golf, tennis, track, or gymnastics. I went through it, a week in each of about twelve sports, but did not become excited about any. The most useful, though, was one week in everyday exercise. The instructor said that as college students, we probably would travel more and carry a suitcase. So he showed us how to carry a suitcase properly, with the elbow slightly bent, not hanging dead weight, and how to go up a staircase with it. We each carried a folding chair, suitcase fashion, and scurried up and down the aisles of the bleachers. We learned how to lift objects to avoid strain.

I had to pick one of the courses, so I picked tennis, but I was never very good at it. Thus, with the swimming course from which I was excused, the "orientation" course, and a quarter at tennis, I completed the required year of physical education.

Financial Means

My freshman year was not difficult. My restaurant job was steady, I ate well enough, and I managed to scrape up enough for room rent and tuition by making ship models. The next two years were not quite so easy.

At Indiana State at that time there was little help for students, of the type known after World War II. There were no student loans, other than a few emergency funds from which one could borrow up to perhaps $150 total.

There were no work-study programs and very few, if any, student-assistant jobs. I did act as an instructor to classes in remedial English, for freshmen who came from poor schools and were inadequately equipped. This lasted only one term, and I did not receive any pay for it; probably I was given credit for some other first-year English course, which I did not need to take.

In short, it was "sink or swim" economically. You simply had to find some way in the town to earn room rent, food, and clothing. I would not praise this as a philosophy. There was no doubt that it affected my studies, especially in my third year. I never made the honor roll with my grades in any year.

There were few amenities at the college. The bookstore carried only texts. There was no coffee shop, only a Coke machine. The many black students had a locker room of their own on the lower floor. There were no blacks in any of the local fraternities.

Reality Set In

The college provided free lectures and programs as part of our activities fee. During the years 1930 to 1933, I attended programs by Will Durant, the philosopher; Richard Halliburton, the adventurer; Admiral Richard Byrd (to whom I was introduced), the Antarctic explorer; the Denishawn dancers; and the pianist Percy Grainger.

In my freshman year, I was active in the Boy Scouts and in the Methodist- Episcopal Church. In the Scouts, I helped organize new troops, did some training, and taught the Indian sign language. In the church, I became leader of the college Bible class.

During one quarter in my second year, I slept on a cot in the basement of the Boy Scout headquarters in return for doing janitor work, and that was how I handled “room rent.”

As the depression deepened, I heard that J. Anguish, the Boy Scout executive back in Fort Wayne, was let go and was replaced by a man at a lower salary, because funds were cut. I thought less of becoming a Boy Scout professional leader and began to look more toward becoming a teacher. Even that perspective was due to change one year later.

I enjoyed college life. The hard times of the Depression meant less to me than to people older than I, for to me there was no letdown; I started my economic life in the basement and lack of money was as common to me as lack of palm trees was to an Eskimo. I had nowhere to go but up.

Four factors caused our development in college.

- the subjects we studied and the facts we learned in our courses
- the professors, especially those few who helped to shift the direction of our efforts
- the friends we made, who taught us much about living
- the experience of making one's own way in the world

There should have seen a fifth factor, but it never reached me. That is, in a college one might possibly find some new goal in life, a possible career never before known. This probably never happened to me at Indiana State because everything was focused on becoming a teacher.

Introduction to Books

I continued to be deeply interested in books but without any awareness of the scope of my interest. I collected a twenty-eight volume set of the entire works of Robert Louis Stevenson, in cheap 'remainder' editions that I bought one by one for a few cents. Toward end of my freshman year, I did not go to the cafe for lunch but instead bought a wedge of yellow cheese for a dime and a small loaf of bread for a dime and lunched on those while I read in my room all of the volumes of Galsworthy's ***Forsyte Saga***.

Figure 8 - Sophomore - 1932

In my second year, I worked at a cafe about eighteen blocks from Van Horn's, and after arriving back at my room late at night, I read a section of Tolstoy's ***War and Peace*** every night and have gone through it at least twice since then.

The college library had one hundred thousand volumes, I did not use it as much as I might have, except for materials I needed in courses. I prowled the stacks at times and looked at such books as the ***Egyptian Book of the Dead***. I read almost anything that anyone recommended, from James Branch Cabell's ***Jurgen*** to Ben Hecht's ***Count Bruga***.

Late in my sophomore year I made friends with Phillips Peck, who was a local freshman. He was eager to go into newspaper work and was one of the few I knew who did not plan to be a teacher. We talked about books. I advised him to explore some of the lesser-known bypaths of books, and I drew up a list of suggestions, such as the ***Egyptian Book of the Dead***, Nietzsche's ***Thus Spake Zarathustra***, Everette Harre's ***Behold the Woman***, and similar works, not simply for their content but as examples of the use of words and style. I showed this list to one of my professors. I think it startled him a little, but it did not lower me in his estimation. It probably brought me more to his attention.

Toward the end of my freshman year, I became interested in magicians' tricks and thought that I might master a few well enough to make money giving shows at parties. I

kept this interest for about two years, but I never made any money, and I will describe that activity in the **Magician** chapter as it had no connection with my college work.

In my second year, I became more adapted to college. My memory of home back in Fort Wayne faded. Terre Haute was now my home, and even after I graduated, my career lay elsewhere. It became harder to earn my room and board. The cafe where I worked changed hands, and eventually the new owner hired no more students. I worked for a while at another cafe, owned by the same people who owned the place where I first worked. After a distance of fifty years, I find it harder to remember just when I lived where, and just when I worked at this job or that.

Fine Arts

Twice during my college years, I took unorthodox courses. I knew little about fine music, so I signed up for a course in music appreciation. I was told that history majors had to stick to prescribed courses, and thus I attended that course only as a listener, without participation and without credit. It did not make much of an impression on me.

Another elective course did. This was one called "Orientation in Art," and it was organized along the same lines as the orientation course in physical education. We spent each of twelve weeks on a different aspect of art, such as pen and ink drawing, watercolors, costume design, portrait profile drawing, etc. For the first time, I drew with a Crow quill dip pen and India ink on fine Strathmore plate finished Bristol, and was quite enjoyable. I learned something about colors. Art was never again foreign to me.

Figure 9 - Crow Quill Dip Pen Nib #107

In this class two other fellows became boon companions. One was named Roland Grimes; I forget the name of the other. We gave each other nicknames of Michelangelo, Rembrandt, and Titian. I was "Rem," Roland was "Mike," and the third man was "Tish."

Spartan Life

Roland became a companion over many years. His father was a local architect, but Roland moved out of the home and lived on his own, with no income from his father. When we first met, Roland lived in an old house that was so run-down the owner could not rent it, and he allowed Roland to live there, possibly because it was safer to have someone in it than to leave it empty. It had no heat, no electricity, and no furniture. We slept on some nondescript bedding on the floor of one room, had our showers and shaves at the gym, used candles for light, studied at the library, and half furtively managed to get

by. I do not know how we squared matters with the Dean of Men; maybe we simply did not mention this. It was quite uncomfortable and did not last long.

At another time, we lived in a small house or shack on the back lot of its owner's residence. This place was perhaps ten by eighteen feet and was divided into two rooms. The only heat was a small iron stove in one room, which had two chairs and a table. The other room had no furniture. Each room had a single electrical light bulb hanging on a cord from the ceiling. We slept on the floor of the second room, using, each, three assorted sofa cushions, which tended to separate during the night, and so we referred to going to bed as "riding the camel." Again, we did our ablutions at the gym.

That was a lean period in many ways, with times when I had some sort of breakfast one morning and had no food until late the next afternoon except perhaps a cup of coffee.

One of my professors. Edward M. Gifford, from the English department once came to the door with a large sack of groceries. I never did know how he knew of our need. There were no such things as food stamps in those days. Another English professor, a woman, occasionally stopped me as I was leaving class and gave me fifty cents.

One night, as Roland and I were preparing to "ride the camel," I found a dime in my bedding. We lived at least twelve blocks from a small doughnut shop that served two thin doughnuts and a cup of watery coffee for five cents, total. We got dressed, walked those twelve blocks, had the coffee and doughnuts, and walked back quite satisfied.

We kept a pot of stew going on the stove, sometimes for several days, adding each day whatever new ingredients acquired, such as more carrots, more potatoes, or more turnips.

This may sound like the horrors, but it was not. On sunny afternoons, I would set up my old side-winding Oliver typewriter on some cement blocks out in the yard and write a term paper. Roland would play his violin. Sometimes we tried to practice fencing with no real equipment, and this fizzled. For a time we practiced an experiment in languages. On the inside of our front door we hung a placard with one word: French, or Spanish, or German. On that day we used no English word if we knew the foreign equivalent. You can see what I mean about how one learns from one's friends.

Newspaper Print Shop

During summer 1932, I did not go back to Fort Wayne at all except for quick visits. A man named Jack Jewett, who attended Indiana State many years before and was a member of Chi Delta Chi, my fraternity, became a local printer. His plant was on south Third Street (now U.S. 41); in a former schoolhouse, of brick, two stories and a large basement. He did job printing such as grocery handout circulars. That occurred in 1932, the year when Franklin D. Roosevelt was elected.

There were two newspapers in town, one morning and one afternoon, but they had the same plant, the same political editorial stance, and even the same ownership. This meant that the opposing political party had no newspaper support. At the college, there was

little talk of politics; perhaps a teachers' college was supposed to guard against political activism, for schoolteachers were generally careful to maintain a non-partisan stance.

It shows how little I was then aware of politics. I was barely past nineteen and a half years of age. I was not twenty until after the decisive election of 1932. Therefore, I assume that the party without a newspaper was the Republican Party, and that group launched one of its own, called the **Terra Haute News**. I did not keep any copies, although I kept a few clippings of some random columns I wrote.

The News was a makeshift affair. It appeared daily, or at least five times a week. It probably had eight full-size pages. The backers wrote the lead article, which always had a political twist, wrote several front-page articles, all editorials, and some inside articles, all politically inclined in support of their party. Jack Jewett supplied everything else in the way of news. He could sell advertising, and the political backers paid enough to keep the paper going, at least until the elections.

Jewett had no rotary press, only an old sheet-fed flatbed cylinder press. The press run probably did not exceed a couple of thousand.

> *This was a type of letterpress printing press that utilized a moving flatbed that holds the type while a fixed rotating cylinder provides the pressure that makes the impression. The paper is secured to the cylinder and rolled over the printing surface as the bed passes under the cylinder. The flatbed cylinder press has not been manufactured in the United States since 1962 and is slowly becoming obsolete.* - Dictionary of Marketing Terms, by Jane Imber and Betsy-Ann Toffler, Barron's Educational Series, Inc

Jewett bought flat sheets from a syndicated service, the Western Newspaper Union, which came already printed on one side with patent medicine ads and stock columns such as on gardening, fashions, cooking, and innocuous stories of general interest. This meant that we filled pages 1, 3, 6 and 8 with newly typeset stories, and the rest were preprinted. The backers provided even one-fourth of the new material. That still left three pages for news and ads. Jack Jewett knew I was a member of his old fraternity, so he got in touch with me to do much of the writing. There was little money around, and most of the work was either volunteer or barter. I was paid a quarter of a cent per printed line, and that came to about thirty cents per column. Even this small amount was paid in newspaper space. I could sell the advertising space and keep whatever I could collect. There may have been a dollar or two a week in cash.

I filled that space up with news. I rounded up several young volunteers. My friend Phillips Peck did some writing as a chance to carry a press card and do some "real" newspaper work. He was energetic and enthusiastic. In later years, I heard that he rose to a good post with the International News Service in Washington, D.C.

A young woman wrote society news, filling columns with weddings and parties, a young fellow named Forrest wrote sports news. I collected a small share on the lines filled by

these people. Each day I hurried to the railroad station to get the incoming newspapers from Chicago, Saint Louis, and Indianapolis, to do capsule rewrites of national news.

It was all a big game to us, a game that was, however, real. We had press cards, passes to every local event, and other perquisites. By the time our enthusiasm began to flag, the election was over, Roosevelt was elected president, and the [political party] subsidy ended. Jewett tried valiantly to continue the News as a weekly, but it eventually died.

This was my introduction to printing. The shop had one Linotype and several old, small job presses, and I learned the barest rudiments of how to set type and feed a platen press. We were non-union, of course, and there was fear of sabotage. Many nights one of us slept atop the old cylinder press, but there was no violence.

I sold ads to restaurants and took payment as meal tickets, so I ate well. I sold one ad to a small local tailor, whose business was chiefly alterations and pressing, and in payment he gave me an old fashion park tuxedo, cut down to fit me, with a white pique vest.

During this period, I slept on a cot in the basement of the printing plant [as my room.].

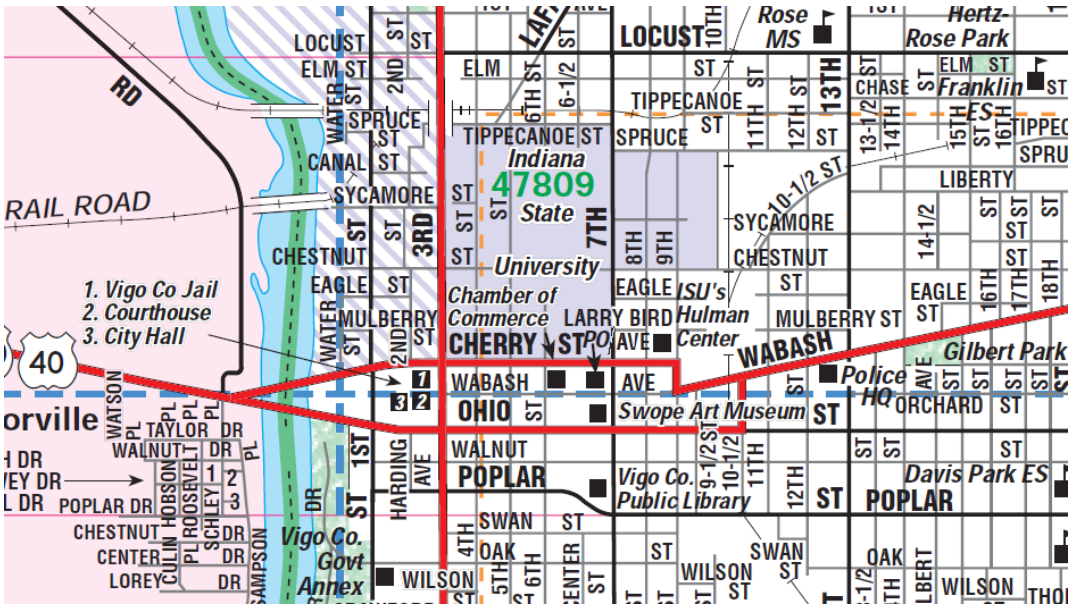


Figure 10 - Terre Haute City Center - 2010

Art's Cafe

An example of free enterprise during the Depression impressed me when Art came to Terre Haute as a hobo. Perhaps in a lucky night of gambling, he accumulated fifteen dollars and opened a restaurant.

On a side street in the run-down part of town, he got the use of a storefront room; perhaps on shares or probably rent-free if he would clean out the place and repaint it. In a back room was an old coal cook stove. Art bought a few second-hand plates, cups, and kitchen tools. They were readily available for a nickel each. He built a makeshift

counter of boards and found a couple of small square tables with an assortment of mismatched wooden chairs.

His menu was brief, not particularly appetizing, but filling. At first, he had only one dish on the menu; fried liver (in the days when it was one of the cheaper of meats because its health value was not known), a big dollop of dressing made of day-old bread, a boiled potato, and a cup of strong coffee. The price was fifteen cents, and the portions were big. There was sugar in a bowl and a can of condensed milk with two holes punched in the top, in case you wanted cream. You had to be hungry to eat there, but it kept starvation away. There were plenty of unemployed men glad to get such a meal at that price.

He sold cigarettes, buying a pack of a brand such as Marvels, Twenty Grand's, or Tom's, which then cost only ten cents for a pack of twenty. Art sold the cigarettes for one cent each, if you wanted a smoke after dining. He worked hard and long, washing dishes after almost every customer because he had so little "china."

Figure 11 - Terre Haute Comparative Prices - 1933 (Ray Thomas - Postcards)

Art did everything; cooking, serving, and washing the dishes, at first. His patronage grew and his menu then varied a little. He began to add other dishes to the menu and offered a choice of meals at twenty or twenty-five cents.

Soon he had a counter-man, whose name I forget, but he was a hobo. A hobo then was an itinerant worker; a tramp was a man who traveled, but never sought work. This fellow gave me long lectures on how to ride freight trains. This was only passing conversation to me, but three years later, I was putting it to use. [His sage advice appears in the **Wander Year** chapter.]

There was a prostitute named Thelma who hung around the cafe. She was presented as the waiter's "wife," and with a crowd at rush hours, she sometimes worked behind the counter. It was a long time before I knew her occupation, but she was never furtive and was quite matter of fact about it. She worked in a "house" a few blocks away.

One night I was out quite late, probably at a movie, and when I arrived back at the printing plant, my key was in another garment still in the basement. I was locked out; it

was too late to arouse Jewett, who lived on the second floor, and a heavy rain was falling. Then I remembered a new, cheap hotel, seven or eight blocks away.

It was operated by an elderly man who was quite successful in business in some city east of Indiana, out in the early days of the depression he lost everything, been a total bankrupt, and his wife divorced him for non-support. He drifted to Terre Haute and made one more try. On a side street near the river was a small old hotel that was closed for years and was quite neglected. I heard that he was cleaning it up, room by room, and was renting rooms for twenty-five cents a night or less. The beds were old and rickety, the sheets were threadbare, and the place was cheerless but clean.

So I headed there, for I had a few cents in my pocket. I was rarely along those particular streets, for they were known as the red light district. On the way I passed Thelma's place, which she described, in Art's Cafe, by location, style, and color. The girls along that street had bright lamps in their windows, even on such a late, raining hour. I glanced at the house and went on to the hotel, which was as publicized and stayed there.

> The next day at Art's, Thelma came up to me and said, "*Didn't I see you go past my place last night?*"
>
> I explained to her how I had seen locked out, was short on money, and walked to the new flophouse.
>
> "*You could have stayed at my place,*" she replied. "*It wouldn't have cost you anything, and you didn't need to do anything. We always have an empty room.*"

She was quite sincere about it. I never had an occasion to take her up on the offer.

I mention all this to show the range of experiences of college years. I was still attending college, in spite of my newspaper work. I not only managed to keep up with my studies, at least enough to pass the tests, but I was taking part in other scholastic activities.

Poetry

One of these activities was the poetry club on campus. I was writing a few verses for my own amusement. One day a young woman with several poems published spoke to our class. Afterward I mentioned to her that I tried some writing. She asked what sort of poems, and I replied that I worked in "free verse." I probably was very lofty about this. She took me down a peg or two by saying that only after one mastered the craft by disciplined exercise could one become free. She suggested that I try writing a sonnet, to learn how to work within limits of rhythm and rhyme and form.

Thirty years later, I heard this same principle expressed by two others. One was the great typographic designer, T.M. Cleland, who referred to some brash, upstart designers as "*those who attempt to secede from a craft to which they had never been admitted*." The other instance was when a noted Houston architect, Barthelme, father of the writer Donald Barthelme, spoke of the need for "mastery of the medium" before one could safely venture into innovations.

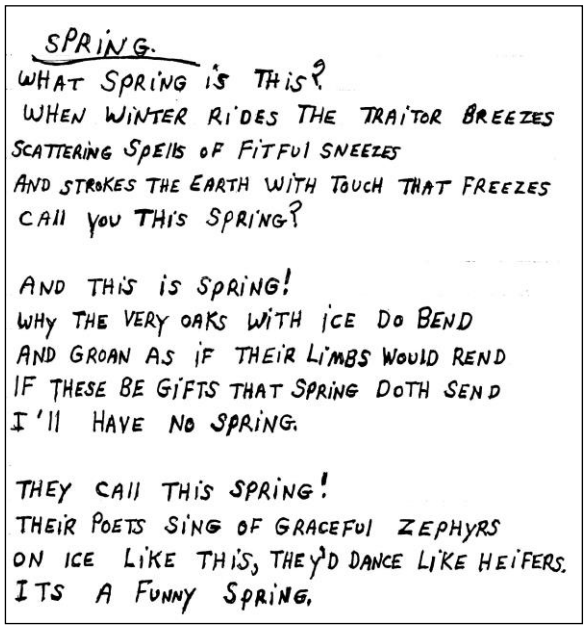
Therefore, I tried the sonnets, fourteen lines, each in iambic pentameter. I wrote sonnets upon sonnets, until I could almost automatically think and talk in iambic pentameter.

SPRING

What spring is this?
When winter rides the traitor breezes
Scattering spells of fitful sneezes
And strokes the earth with touch that freezes.
Call <u>you</u> this spring?

And this is spring!
Why the very oaks with ice do bend
And groan as if their limbs would rend
If these be gifts that spring doth send
I'll have no spring.

They call this spring!
Their poets sing of graceful zephyrs
On ice like this, they'd dance like heifers
It's a funny spring


SPRING.
WHAT SPRING IS THIS?
WHEN WINTER RIDES THE TRAITOR BREEZES
SCATTERING SPELLS OF FITFUL SNEEZES
AND STROKES THE EARTH WITH TOUCH THAT FREEZES
CALL YOU THIS SPRING?

AND THIS IS SPRING!
WHY THE VERY OAKS WITH ICE DO BEND
AND GROAN AS IF THEIR LIMBS WOULD REND
IF THESE BE GIFTS THAT SPRING DOTH SEND
I'll HAVE NO SPRING.

THEY CALL THIS SPRING!
THEIR POETS SING OF GRACEFUL ZEPHYRS
ON ICE LIKE THIS, THEY'D DANCE LIKE HEIFERS.
ITS A FUNNY SPRING.

[Charlotte found this unattributed sonnet among Jack's papers. Since it was 14 lines of iambic pentameter, he likely kept this as the sole example of his numerous sonnets.]

Once I wrote a long poem in the form of a play. Later I read Rostand's ***Cyrano de Bergerac*** and considered my plot line similar to his great work, although mine was a poor imitation—although I never read his work before. My hero did not have a long nose, but he was a poor poet in Paris who hoped to win a girl of high standing.

The school poetry magazine published a few of my poems. I became president of the small poetry club, and in 1933 was awarded the college's poetry prize, which was not an especially high distinction. My poems were juvenile and romantic.

Debate Team

I joined the debating team and spent two years on the squad. I enjoyed that very much, especially the rules and customs of intercollegiate debating. A committee somewhere in the US each year selected a topic, which was always stated positively. In the two years I was active, one year the topic was "*Resolved: The United. States shall extend diplomatic recognition to the Soviet Union*," and another year, the question was whether the federal income tax should be applied only to wages and salary (earned income) or to interest and dividends (unearned income). A handbook was prepared and circulated, with a bibliography of readings on the topic.

The rules were simple: if you cited a fact or figure, or quoted an opinion, you must tell where you got your information, and that source must be available to both sides and it must be from an acceptable source. Only two newspapers were considered above reproach; the Christian Science Monitor and the New York Times. If a debater wrote to any prominent person and received in reply a letter with information or opinion, that could not be used in debate unless the other side had a copy of that letter. Each debater began to build his card file of arguments, each entry supported by facts, figures, and opinions, with the source listed. As you listened to the opposing speaker, you marshaled your reply by pulling out the cards to support your argument, when your turn came.

There were tryouts or audition to get on the debating squad. The applicant could speak on any subject, and the decision was made chiefly on one's delivery. The squad was finally narrowed to about a dozen. Only men ever tried out for debate at my school.

Each debater prepared to speak on either the affirmative or the negative side, and we never knew which side would be assigned during a practice session. Eventually we developed an affirmative team and a negative team, each including two speakers and an alternate, who took over if one of the first two was ill or could not get away for a debate. The professor, as our coach and mentor, drove his car and took the three of us when our team went to another city for a debate. There was a statewide debate tournament once a year and that specific year we all went to Manchester College.

The program was along very fixed lines. First, we gave our introductory arguments, with each speaker allowed eight minutes; the first affirmative speaker, the first negative speaker, the second, affirmative, and the second negative. Then we gave our rebuttals, to reply to the other side, with the order of speakers reversed: the first negative, the first affirmative, the second negative, and the second affirmative, each speaking for five minutes. This totaled fifty-two minutes. With introductions, the debate lasted an hour.

We held the debates in college auditoriums, and there were always two or three adult judges. In the end, these judges announced the winning side, based on the arguments

presented and the quality of delivery. We soon learned to find out what each particular judge liked and to speak to impress that judge. Some like heavy logic, others laid most weight on delivery; some liked flamboyant oratory, others liked quiet seriousness. We never tried to win audience approval.

Our debating league included only colleges and universities within Indiana, and I remember debating at Indiana University in Bloomington and in a few other cities; often their teams came to Terre Haute. In our first year, we had a mixed amount of victories and defeats. In the season of 1932-33, our team was never defeated. There was no attempt to decide upon a state champion. I was on the affirmative team both years. The varsity debating teams were given memberships in the honorary national forensic fraternity "Alpha Sigma Phi". We received a small gold "key" similar to a Phi Beta Kappa key, which we could wear on a watch chain.

At the end of each year, Indiana State Teachers College awarded the Jardine medal to "*the student who has made the best record or rendered the greatest service on the Intercollegiate Debating Team of the school*." This award was first given in 1929, and it was given to me as the fifth recipient, in 1933. I was the first undergraduate to win it, for graduate students could be on the debating teams.

Just as I met two good companions in my art class, so I made two friends: Warren Cordell and Jack Roney. After he finished college, Cordell went to the Chicago area and became either an attorney or a public accountant. He became very successful and was a great book collector, specializing in dictionaries. He died in 1980 or 1981, and I had not seen him nor heard from him since 1933.

I came to know Roney very well. We called him "Jack" but his name was really Charles. His mother had quite a flavor of Irish about her, and she ran a boarding house on the south side of town, with several men boarders who worked at the Libby-Owens glass plant. I often ate there.

Jack was in my fraternity and completed his studies a few years before I arrived. He was a Jardine medal winner. He could find no work during the depression, so he was often on campus. In the election of 1932, he ran for some minor local political office but did not win. I went out campaigning with him a few times and got a little of the feel of ward politics in Indiana. There were always several contenders for posts, and they formed in groups called "tickets" or "slates," so each could bring votes not just for himself or herself but for the "slate."

Roney was a tall, jovial fellow who "hung loose"; he was never tense but took everything with ease and confidence. He taught me much about the technique of debate.

Roney, Cordell, and I often walked around, the campus together, and we played an memory game as we walked. One of us would recite a line from Shakespeare. One of the others had to say something relative to the quotation, either tells the name of the play and the scene, or recite the line that preceded or followed the quotation. The first speaker

then solemnly handed a cigar to the other. He in turn could recite another quotation, and the third man had to make the response. This went on for several blocks with the one cigar changing hands many times. Eventually, we came to where our paths diverged, and whoever had the cigar at that point kept it.

Distinctive Traits of 1930's College Life

I can see that the academic part of my college life was not far different from college life and classes today, but we did differ in small ways.

No one wore blue jeans, for those were considered akin to overalls, and so many of the male students came from the farm that they really wished to adopt "city" garb. We usually wore a shirt, tie, and slacks. The seniors were allowed to wear cream-colored corduroy slacks, known as "senior cords," which they wore with pride, and no underclassman could wear them. Most of us had at least one suit to wear to church and on dates. I wore a derby hat on occasions, but usually we did not wear hats. I never saw a girl in slacks or shorts. They always wore dresses.

Hardly any students had autos. Either those who did were local boys using the family car, or graduate students back from a teaching job taking more training. In the spring of 1933 when my college career was beginning to reach a critical stage, I did have a car. I owned a 1922 Model T Ford in high school in Fort Wayne. I sold it to a friend before I went to college, and three years later when he tired of it, I bought it back for about twenty-five dollars, at five dollars a month.

Figure 12 – 1922 Model T Ford (wikipedia.org)

Many of us smoked. In my first year, I tried smoking a pipe, but I did not know how to do it properly and became sick, so I switched to cigarettes. We were not allowed to smoke on the campus itself or in any campus building, but we could smoke on the streets and sidewalks around the campus.

Fraternities

None of the fraternities were chapters of a national fraternity. There apparently was a law that the national Greek-letter fraternities would not be allowed at teachers' colleges. The urge for companionship was strong, and from the beginning of the school, there were "literary societies," called Forum, Daedalian, Trojan, and Ciceronian. Three of these had their own houses and were de facto fraternities; by the time I arrived, all used Greek letter pseudonyms; the Ciceronians were openly the Chi Delta Chi fraternity, for instance.

My old friend McCammon described each to me: the Forum boys came from well-to-do families, wore tuxedos, and gave expensive dances; the Trojans drew the athletes, the Daedalians were chiefly country boys, and the Ciceronians were the bookish crowd. I picked the Ciceronians and had happy times with them. We met one evening a week in the old house that served as a "student union" building. It was just a social evening, with no set program, no food or drinks. I remember that there were some drama students in the group, some very good musicians who were in the college orchestra, several from the debating team, a few would-be writers, and many talkers - - great talkers!

The bunch back at the rooming house filled in aspects of what was often accomplished in a fraternity house. We learned about the idiosyncrasies of professors, methods of study, how to wear clothes, learned to dance by shuffling around with each other, helped others in their studies, and were taught the general customs of life. There was much horseplay and practical joking.

Each fraternity and sorority had a spot in the main building that served as a rallying point, a rendezvous. One could stop there for a minute between classes or spent more time if not attending a class that hour. We left messages for each other on the bulletin board there, and used it as a center for news and gossip.

In 1933, I drew a sort of coat of arms or crest for Chi Delta Chi and fastened it at the top of the board. After I left college in the fall of 1933, I never went back to Terre Haute except when I passed through there in the early fall of 1944. I had a few minutes between trains, and it was night, but I still went to see the old main building. That was during the "off" month when no students were on campus. The Chi Delta Chi bulletin board was still in its place, topped by the crest I had drawn. It seemed like a generation earlier. The halls were empty; no one was around.

Dancing and Dating

This college was co-ed, of course, at least fifty-fifty boys and girls. The girls had their sororities, and the college held frequent dances in the gym. During all the years there, I never knew any married students. If we went on dates, it was for the evening; many "went steady" for long periods. No one thought of marriage. I do not know if there was any rule against it; it simply never came up. Every male student I knew expected to finish his schooling, get a job somewhere, and then find "the" girl. Some of the local girls, who lived with their families in Terre Haute, did drop out of college to marry local young men who established themselves in a job or in business.

Most men had dates with girls, especially as freshmen, but few had "steady" girls, and we rarely had a date as often as once a week. There were at least six or eight organized dances each school year, sororities in the school gym and at other times the dances were organized by the fraternities, When any fraternity held a dance, all others were invited, but not too many came, because we did not always feel at ease with the other "Greeks." I was chairman for one Chi Delta Chi dance. The dances were the fox trot, the two-step, and sometimes the Lindy hop or a bit of the Charleston, and always one waltz.

There was little sex, a lot of kissing and holding. We went to movies on dates, or on walks in the park, once or twice swimming at a point on the Wabash River where there was a sort of "beach," and much standing or sitting in nooks around the campus. If one went with a local girl, it was common for the young man to go to her home. If you had a friend or fraternity brother who owned a car and kept it parked on a side street, you could ask his permission to sit in the parked car with your girl.

This was the era of the big bands: Tommy Dorsey, Wayne King, and the others. At the east end of Terre Haute there was a large ballroom where these bands played. Admission was expensive; even a dollar was a lot at that time, but we could occasionally go to those dances, perhaps once or twice a year.

Disliked Professors

Professors were an important factor in college life. We had three types: those we liked and admired, those we could not stand as individuals, and those who were pretty much hacks, plodding along at their tasks, doing an adequate job but not inspiring anyone.

I disliked one who was repulsively fat, ate chocolates and drank Cokes during class, and who looked down on blacks. Once when a white girl could not answer a question, the teacher turned to a black, who probably had the correct answer. The teacher said to this white girl, "*Aren't you ashamed of yourself?*" It was said that this teacher held her post because her family had political connections at the state level. I learned little from her.

Another professor taught psychology and once mentioned in class that he would never dine at the same table with a Negro. Paul Robeson was n a famous singer, and one student asked the professor what he would do if he went to a train dining car, and the only vacant seat was one opposite Paul Robeson. The professor said he would leave the dining car. This shocked most of the class. I did all right in that class, and when for the subject of jargon, the professor asked if anyone could recite a nonsense poem. I stood and recited all verses of ***Jabber-rocky*** from ***Alice in Wonderland***.

This fellow was full of scorn. Once he told one classmate, "*Mister, I suggest that this evening you take your textbook and let it fall open on your desk. Let it fall to any page, and look down, and I am sure the words there will be new and strange to you.*" The boy was a slow student but very serious and later became a teacher.

A third disliked professor was quite old. His saliva drooled, and his chin was never dry. He became quite absentminded and wandered in his speech. He could not hear well and could not always recognize a student who stood up to recite.

Memorable Professors

Some of our best teachers were on campus for only a few months. They were either teaching at State between other jobs or came there for a summer term to earn extra money. Some of these came from Ivy League colleges, and they were like a fresh breeze. The contrast of their delivery often stirred the old timers out of their lethargy and stimulated better teaching all around.

I can look back at the college catalog for 1930 and recall dozens of the professors, but only six or seven made scholastic impression on me. Only four of these had significance.

One was Professor Leslie Meeks, of the English department. He was one of the best scholars at the college and had degrees from both Yale and Harvard. I never had a course under him, but overall, he was the only one to whom I could go for real personal counsel.

Another English professor was Edward M. Clifford, who brought the sack of groceries to our shack. (I made a ship model for him as a return gift, but I regret that it was only a simplified model.) There was Ethel Daum, in the English department, who occasionally asked me if I was eating properly and gave me a half dollar. She complimented me on the resonance of my voice and urged me to try dramatics. I did so once but was not cast.

One of the most remarkable teachers was Hazel Pfennig, who taught English. I had heard that; she did not have to teach for a living, but was married to a very successful local businessman and taught only because she needed mental activity. She encouraged a great deal of class discussion, on one occasion asking us to define "an educated person." This went on for at least two days. We defined, "*an educated person as one who can adapt most quickly and successfully to a wholly new set of circumstances."*

One history professor, Charles Roll, was known around the campus for his knowledge of the bypaths of history. He could, for example, describe the contents of a Revolutionary soldier's knapsack. Once he put the class in an uproar of laughter by describing, with unconscious candor, an incident of General William Henry Harrison's conduct at the start of the Battle of Tippecanoe. "*General Harrison arose early that morning, as was his custom,*" said Roll. "*He was squatting on a hillside, and just as he reached up for a handful of sycamore leaves, he saw the first Indians come over the row of the hill.*" This earthy episode broke up the class. It showed us how small details could bring history to life, and this principle remained with me ever after.

Nevertheless, by the spring of 1933 I was beginning to worry about my own future. It was not that I wearied of the struggle to secure food and lodging; that was as natural a condition to me as heat in summer or cold in winter and was simply the way of life.

Late in my first year, I abandoned the idea of becoming a Boy Scout functionary. Now I was beginning to doubt that I would enjoy teaching or would even get a job if I wanted one. As I grew older, I met some teachers who came back for more study and further credits. They brought disillusioning news from the outer world.

Jobs were harder to get; there were few openings, few or no outside schools sent interviewers to our campus for teaching posts. Sometimes notices appeared on the bulletin boards offering teaching jobs in two subjects, often with impossible combinations; "'Wanted, high school teacher, teach Latin and coach tennis," for example.

In those days, a high school teacher in Indiana might start at $1,400 total for a nine-month school year, and some of the returnees said that they had to slip a hundred dollars to some local politico to clear their new job.

One fraternity brother, a couple of years ahead of me, told how he went to a small town for an interview, a dull village where he knew he would be unhappy, and part of the interview involved a dinner at the local superintendent's home. During the dinner, my friend spilled some gravy on his tie. He did not get the job. I began to see how one would be living in a fishbowl. I always liked teaching things to young people who wanted to learn, but I never enjoyed talking to a dull, uninterested group. I began to take a different view of the whole idea of being a high school teacher. I have not since found anything to change my mind.

The college, founded to provide teachers for schools in the state, was producing more teachers than the market could absorb. It was announced that teachers' certificates would henceforth be granted only to the top one-fourth of each year's graduating class.

A current joke on campus was that one went to college only to learn what sort of work one was out of. There were stories circulating of Purdue University engineering graduates driving trucks or operating gasoline service stations.

My scholastic program included a large number of credit hours devoted to "practice teaching." Adjoining the campus was an actual school where our students did real teaching under the eyes of observers and with critiques after the sessions. Such courses would be of little use to me unless I went on with my plan to be a teacher, so I kept 'bypassing those courses and choosing other courses in my majors, history and English.

By spring 1933, most of my fourth year would be devoted to these courses in practice teaching, and thus was at a fork in the road.

I sought advice in several quarters. I went to Professor Meeks with my dilemma, but he could offer no guidance other than that I must plan my own future. I pointed out to him, as one aspect, that I saw little unity in my education.

> I said, "*I take four courses each quarter, twelve each year. In four years, my mind will have forty-eight pigeonholes, each stuffed with facts, but each*

> *compartment quite separate from the others. Each professor teaches the course as if it were the only one being taught, quite separate from all others. No one relates history to English, or French to psychology, or economics to art. How can I tie all of these together into a whole?"*
>
> He replied, "*I think I know what you mean. You might find that in a course in ethics, but we have no such courses here.*"

I went home to visit my parents and talked with them. Dad attended Hillsdale College in Michigan for at least a year, but that was a generation earlier, and he could offer no suggestions. I went to see our Methodist minister in Fort Wayne, but there was a new man, who came to this church after I left for college, and he did not seem to understand what I was talking about, for it was not exactly a moral issue.

Figure 13 - Junior at age 20 - Spring 1933

Therefore, I drifted away from college after three years. It was not a firm, final decision; I swore no vow that I would leave never to return. I just wanted to see the world.

I renewed my interest in being a magician, although I did not plan to make it a career. I did one or two performances in the summer and early fall of 1933, in southern Indiana, and when they were finished I went back home to Fort Wayne to see what I could find there to do. I never went back to Indiana State Teachers College again except for one visit there in 1944, late at night, between trains on a trip.

Retrospective

There was one powerful argument for staying in college, but it was never mentioned. When one fills out a job application there is always the requirement of education. So many jobs absolutely require four years of college. That diploma is as basic as a driver's license. This is especially true of any civil job, with a museum, federal agency, library, city department, county agency, or anything else. No equivalents are accepted in most cases. The same thing goes for most large corporations, who are the major employers.

If someone had foreseen, back in 1933, this future requirement and pointed out the advantages of having a diploma, and with only one more year to go, I would have changed my course somehow to avoid practice teaching and finished my college training. I have always regretted it. I do not feel that I was a failure of course, but many other doors were open if I secured that diploma. I never recommend that anyone follow my [college] example.

Back in 1933, during the Great Depression whose end no one could foresee, this point never came up. Therefore, I drifted from college and became involved in new interests.

One of the most critical aspects of such a situation is that a young person rarely finds a career early in life and follows it through to the top. I preferred, above all, to be a rare book dealer. In those early years, I did not even know that such a career existed. If instead of wanting to be a Boy Scout executive or a high school teacher, I set out to be a rare book dealer, I needed courses in:

- library training
- bibliography
- developing a memory
- basic elements of business management such as retailing

I expanded my study of languages to include at least German, learned how to conduct business correspondence in the languages I knew, and tried to work as a student aide in the college library. No student on campus had a part-time job in any part of the school. To do this, I needed a different college!

I would still have kept my majors in English and history, and most of the other courses. In fact, that fourth year could have done it all, and I was not on the wrong track by taking the solid course in the basics of a well-rounded education.

I could fill out this account with anecdotes of other episodes. I lived in seven different residences during those three years, and learned a lot about the ways of life, chief among which was how to survive. When I left Terre Haute for home, I was two months short of twenty-one, in September 1933.