

Meanwhile, behind McIver

by Laura Toler
Features Writer

"Elizabeth, do you think I'm getting any?"
All afternoon the girls suffer on McIver lawn, one half hour on each side.
"Wish they'd mow the grass out here. I can't tell the grass tickles from ant attacks."
"Yeah, but how can they mow it with us out here every day?"
Indeed, these die-hards never miss a day. Schedules and lifestyles revolve around the sun. Soap operas, letter writing, homework, and shopping are all foregone in the interest of a browner body.
Such ambitious academic really ought to compile a body of literature on "How to Get a Tan." The excellent sources on McIver lawn can supply first-hand information, such as what kind of swimsuit to wear, what color towel to use, what brand of lotion to apply (baby oil is the favorite) and what time of day to "lay out" (which, not to imply otherwise, is a professional term for reclining in the sun for the purpose of obtaining a tan).
"I'm going to have a heat stroke. I can feel it coming."
"Don't worry. My roommate's a nursing major. Lectures me all the time about skin cancer."
Various intellectual conversations, which sun bathers pursue to divert their wilting spirits from the sizzling ultraviolet, make even

better use of time by expanding the mind as well as the body.
"I counted four Volkswagens at the last light—how 'bout you?"
Yes, this physical labor which appears to be luxurious living is conducted beside one of the busiest intersections on campus—where those with appointments to make, jobs to do and causes to defend must pause and look on in ignorant envy. Occasionally a chorus of whistles issues from a truck load of construction workers.
"Derelects. Only interested in a girl's body."
"Well what are you doing this for anyway."
"You've got a point there."
And the four guys throwing the Frisbee edge closer and closer.
One way to forget the heat is to watch the squirrels. McIver lawn harbors what some consider the fattest and tamest squirrels the world has ever known. These scavengers edge perilously close to each towel in hopes that some sweltering, picnicing human might bless them with a peanut or a cracker.
Although some sunners may be scorned for shucking serious self-improvement, other bold baskers are bent on having a beautiful brain to beat the body. They manage to shut out the traffic, taunts and temperature by turning to a textbook. Pushing a sweaty Hi-Lighter may be difficult, but a few gals actually absorb facts as well as rays. Some try to and fail.
"I can't study out here with the sweat dripping onto my book. I'm going to the library."
"Be sure to take a sweater."



Staff photo by Gary Lovelace



Staff photo by Gary Lovelace

by Harvey Elliott
Film Critic

Our Time opens with the fall term at Penfield Academy, 1955. Group assembly, around which most of the girls' schedule is organized, has begun. Abby arrives late, slips into a pew next to her friend Muffy, and begins to elaborate on her success in reaching third base with her summer boyfriend.

This preoccupation never lets up, neither during the term nor the movie. Attractive Abby gets whatever she wants, including a homerun with handsome preppie Michael. Muffy has a little rougher going. She's the scriptwriter's old standby, destined for heartbreak because she isn't exactly beautiful, though anybody can see she's got twice the wit and personality of any

other character in the film.

Screenwriter Jane C. Stanton must bear much of the blame for the superficiality and soapiness of *Our Time*. The engaging performances of the film's principals are able to obscure some of this: it's not painful to sit through, but I'd hate to read the script. We tend to ignore the shaky motivation for Muffy's decision to dispose of her virginity, because newcomer Betsy Slade plays her realistically and sincerely.

The screenplay eventually gets around to making a well-meant but out-of-key statement of Woman's Right to Abortion and the dangers of having to obtain one illegally. In the middle of this film, it's as uncomfortable as an anti-war statement would be, a bit of anachronistic crusading which, though motivated, just doesn't fit.

The director, Peter Hyams, was obviously told by the producer (who made much money with *Summer of '42*) to fill the little melodrama with lushness and sentiment. The camera lens, then, is greased up to make scenes glow in hazy, blinding sunlight. Michael Legrand's insistent strings are put on double duty to underscore, and overdo, all the emotional moments. Nostalgia isn't inherently shameful, especially in motion pictures, when it can instill some long-deserved respect for old films and old forms into moviegoers and moviemakers. But careless or exploitative nostalgia, for its own sake, can lead to an aesthetic emptiness where one is left with nothing but romanticized, and historically inaccurate, remembrances.
The action of *Our Time* takes place in 1955, when the screenwriter was seven years old and the director

eleven. Possibly relying on memories of their own adolescences, however later they occurred, this duo must have decided that pop-culture research wasn't necessary.
Consequently, subjective references are thrown into the dialogue and decor, willy nilly.
Hyams walks his girls through a grocery store, carefully shooting past a box of "period" detergent, only to have Abby walk out with a bag of Ruffles (with r-ridges, Copyright Frito-Lay 1967).
He played the 50's for all he could get—sex and long skirts—and ignored everything else, both atmospheric and dramatic, which could possibly make his film memorable. As it is, *Our Time* is a piece of libidinous fluff in which one is unfortunately more interested in potato chips than people.

'Our Time' shows more fluff from the 50's

Henry reigns as comic-king

Exploration of some of these subtleties is probably more rewarding than the strip itself.

The obvious example is Don Schachte. Schachte is not a household name like Charles Schulz, because *Henry* lacks both the sentimental charm and intellectual extravagance of *Peanuts*. It's not very funny, either, just a basic comic strip that has lasted down through the decades because it does everything a comic has to do.

Schachte is a minor genius, harmless enough. *Henry* is a classic.

The leading character, Henry, is an utterly bald, deformed child who is congenitally mute. Henry is so silent that he doesn't even make sound effects when he moves or leave little black lines hanging in the air when he moves fast.

He doesn't even have a mouth. His eyes are perpetually shut, and his oversized ears stick straight out like green peppers glued on a jack-o-lantern. His left ear can be distinguished from his right by examining whether the little "S" lines denoting its contours are drawn backwards or forwards. His black basketball shoes don't have any laces.

Last Sunday, Henry was busy reuniting young lovers who had quarreled. In the first frame, a blonde girl gives him a pink envelope and speaks the story's only line of dialogue: "Skip over to my boyfriend's house with this note."

As Henry sets off down the street, wavy lines radiate from the envelope and he leans

forward, nose quivering. This means, of course, that the stationery is scented.

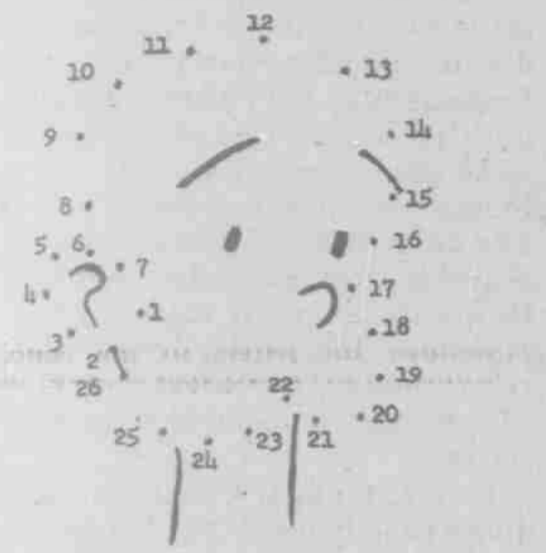
He walks past the boyfriend's window and settles against a nearby tree, sniffing away, while the lovesick fellow carries on a wordless phone conversation for three frames. First, there's a shattered heart suspended in the air over the telephone, then a single question mark, and finally a pair of hearts, connected to his face by dotted lines.

At this point, his white bow tie turns red. Henry is still sniffing, sprawled on the grass. But the young man has spotted him there with the note; his mouth shifts over to the side of his face, indicating, obviously, that he's angry.

In the last frame, the boyfriend is cross-legged under the tree, sniffing and smiling, while Henry walks away, hands out, palms up, to denote a shrug.

For the record, the girlfriend's house in this story is pink with a purple roof.

Presumably, that's the way Americans like it.



Connect the dots.

by Ellen Horowitz
Features Writer

On Sundays, one section of every newspaper in the realm is printed in living color and devoted entirely to the art of the comic strip.
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