

OVERPROTECTED AMERICAN YOUTH NEED TO FACE REALITY

By Ann Brinson

Every seven and one-half seconds a child is born in the United States. Upon birth he is put into a sterile nursery where he can watch, and be watched by, the world on the other side of a pane of glass without being contaminated by coming into contact with it. This is fine and necessary for the first few days of his life, but unfortunately, as soon as he is removed from this sterile nursery, unless he is a very lucky child of very unusual parents, he will be placed in a very sterile nutshell and kept there as long as possible. Every so often most children are allowed a small look outside their shell, and the children who are allowed the most freedom begin to reach a small understanding of this world outside.

However, there are a great many parents who seem to think that the biggest favor they can do their child is to shield him from as many of these views of life as possible. They usually find that after a "child" reaches the age of twenty-one it becomes rather difficult to contain him for much longer, that being the arbitrary age set up for becoming a self-sufficient adult in the United States.

Since I am getting dangerously near the "letting out" stage, I have begun to wonder if I am sufficient unto myself. I am perhaps better equipped than some to meet life on its grounds, because I have been allowed out of my shell somewhat. However, I can recognize many signs of immaturity in my actions, and I have given some thought to this "protection racket" that most adults think is necessary for the youth of the United States. I believe that this protection which is so lovingly given us in every phase of our lives not only impedes our personal development, but also impairs the development of our youths in general.

A main area in which this protection plays a big part is the realm of education. The idea, advanced by the more progressive educators, of separating children into classes according to their individual capacities for learning, has been condemned by parents and some psychologists who think that this would be a terrible shock to the slow students. The fast students must be slowed up so the inferior students don't have to face their intellectual slowness. (This seems to be a fallacy in itself, because while in competition with intellectually superior students, the slow child would be continually on the failing end; however, if he was in

competition with students of his own abilities he could sometimes excel in the group.)

In grammar schools as well as in high schools now, educators are stressing the importance of teaching in correlated units, of using bulletin boards, visual aids, and other methods to add interest and amusement to the learning of subject matter. This makes the dosage of education much easier to take, but unfortunately it never makes children learn the need for mental self-discipline. It makes hard, and sometimes unpleasant, drilling of a subject seem terribly boring and therefore quite unnecessary. High school students have come to expect to be excused from the unpleasantness of homework on the night of a big football game or the Senior Class play, and they look forward to their senior year so they can have four classes and two study halls. High school becomes the country club, and the popular teachers who cater to the students certainly don't make them face the fact that however disagreeable it may be, people must take care of their responsibilities before they can be free for pleasure.

By the time the students reach college they should have been led to appreciate, and take seriously, an education. However, even at this level they balk at any strenuous thinking, because they've been protected from doing any such thing for so long. Most college students have never had to employ any mental self-discipline and consequently, they don't know where to begin. They desire, if not actually expect, their professors to hand them their knowledge on a well-plated, if not sterling, platter. Once in a while these students will try to rebel against this easy education. They'll talk about reading original works instead of "books about books", and they are being very sincere about wanting to think for themselves. It is too bad that it isn't expected of them all along the way so that they are in practice and can do it.

In the social world as well as in educational institutions, the protection agents are just as stifling to mature development. Parents protect their children by either pushing them into social activities or by making sure that no other child gets ahead of them, even if it means the other children. In certain high schools in the Miami

area, service clubs, organized under our shoulders quite often. In a large percentage of homes, children are given an allowance without even nominal responsibilities to "earn" it. This keeps a child from being restricted to taking care of his duties before leaving for a good time with his friends, and it also keeps him from developing a sense of the value of money. In most private colleges parents pay in advance for all room, food, laundry, etc. expenses so that a child (of twenty or twenty-one) doesn't have to worry about budgeting her money. If more students were required, or allowed, to earn some of the money for their support, they would soon acquire a sense of monetary value.

A typical example of this situation was shown several years ago in the movie, "Take Care of My Little Girl". A girl whose parents had seen to it that she was included in every social event in her town, came to college and failed to get a bid from the sorority of her choice. She immediately folded up and went home to Mother's protection. She could not be expected to show a mature reaction to this situation, because she had never had to face anything socially unpleasant before.

In the Virginia and Arkansas schools parents are now engaged in protecting their children socially. They have closed integrated schools instead of making sure their children had an adequate and sound basis for deciding for themselves how to conduct themselves in interracial relationships. Sometimes protection is easier than education.

It is not only in social and educational realms that the youth of the United States are protected, but also quite often our personal and moral responsibilities are taken care of for us. Courts of law protect the juvenile delinquents by not revealing their names to the press. Our religious beliefs are formulated for us and handed to us in mass according to our denominations' doctrines. We are so seldom faced with serious issues, that would call for searching ourselves for our philosophy of life that we never think about such things. Even our simple responsibilities are taken off

though, that the amount of sheltering that does go on produces some rather unfortunate consequences; a terrific shock upon meeting for the first time a world that thinks you are no longer a child and suddenly expects you to be a responsible adult; a definite delay in reaching the age of responsibility and maturity; a terrible waste of potential among the intelligent youths who never had their abilities challenged and so never developed them to their fullest; a rather mediocre society where the outstanding have been held back to the level of the inferior. The biggest favor that adults could do for the American youths is to reduce protection to a minimum and instead take the time and trouble to instill in them the basis for accepting their place as responsible, intelligent, realistic adults.

Rondthaler Contest Opens For Creative Salemites

The annual competition for the Katharine Rondthaler awards in its ninth year is now open. The competition is open to all Salem students interested in creative work in art, music, and creative writing. Entries must be submitted to Miss Marsh, Alumnae Secretary, not later than May 1, 1959. The entries will be judged in the three classifications by judges appointed by President Gramley.

The Katharine Rondthaler Awards were established in 1950 by the Alumnae Association in honor of the wife of Salem's former president, Bishop Howard E. Rondthaler. Mrs. Rondthaler knew the name of every College and Academy student who came to Salem during the forty years the Rondthalers were at Salem. In addition to many other talents, she was the author of a book for children entitled "Tell Me A Story".

The first plan for the contest was for original entries of "Salem-inspired" subject matter. It was hoped

that Salem students would become interested in doing research into the history of their school and produce interesting and valuable material. However, this idea did not seem to work and the "Salem-inspired" requirement was enlarged to include creative work in the classifications of art, music, and writing.

The awards are made at the assembly of the year, and again at the annual meeting of the Alumnae Association and on Commencement Day. The prizes are silver trays engraved as Katharine Rondthaler Award with the winner's name as of the date.

The winners last year were, Margaret Taylor for her watercolor "Happy Hill" and Shan Helms for her story, "Salvation." There was no award given in music.

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