

The Chapel Hill Weekly

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A Visiting Professor in Korea

Almonte C. Howell, who has been in the University faculty for thirty-six years, was visiting professor of English in Korea's National University in the capital city of Seoul last year. Here are some passages from his talk to the Faculty Club about the visit. The talk was illustrated with beautiful colored photographs.

My students' ideas of study were different from those held in the United States and I had to change my methods of teaching to conform at least partly to their ways. Reluctantly I became less and less sure that my way was right and theirs wrong.

I soon discovered that the Korean was an intensely emotional person, but that his emotions were controlled by his Confucian background. It is not good form in Korea to display emotion, especially affection; and modesty and humility are characteristic traits of the scholar class. The Korean students appeared to me to be extremely romantic. They live in a war-torn land of drab hillsides, muddy streets, dirt and squalor, in tiny rooms seldom furnished beyond a simple chest and a plain low table, with a straw mat or Korean paper floor; yet they have dreams of beauty and are constantly hoping for the golden age when their country will rise from the ashes of war as a leader in the new Asia.

As a foreigner and a Westerner, I found I had much to learn before I could teach; and my experiences gradually led me to appreciate the many fine qualities I saw in the Koreans, as well as to be patient with what were to me, though hardly to them, defects.

We learned patience from them, and we learned something about the Oriental attitude toward time. Why hurry, they say; things will wait. If classes don't begin today, maybe they will next week. If you begin a class on time, you are being unkind to those who arrive late—so take your time, and remember that good manners are more important than efficiency; and politeness than promptness.

The present-day system of higher education in Korea was developed during the Japanese occupation after 1910. The universities were set up as are those of Europe. The teaching methods introduced by the Japanese are still practiced. In the National University in Seoul classes last for two hours and courses meet only once a week. There are no bells and consequently there is much irregularity in class length. Attendance is optional, and one is never sure until the final examination who is a member of his class. Mrs. Howell, for instance, found that one of her students had taken the final examination in a course in English Conversation, although he had attended only one class, and he was insistent that he should have credit for the course.

The lecture method is used almost entirely. Textbooks are expensive and many students are unable to secure them. Therefore class recitations and discussions are rare. Introductory science courses are given with inadequate equipment and seldom require laboratory work. The same is true regarding library work. The Library contains four hundred thousand volumes in Japanese and two hundred thousand in all the other languages. The stacks, indeed all the books, are virtually inaccessible to students. There is a card catalogue, but the books are merely shelf-listed. Students cannot check books out of the Library and reserved reading lists are a rarity.

Without the give-and-take of class discussion a great gap exists between the professor and the student—a relic of the aristocratic Japanese system.

Professors are seldom on the campus, and such things as private offices are reserved solely for department heads. The professor is likely to consider his students as necessary interruptions of his prime work in the study and the laboratory. His lectures are likely to be on his own specialty; and introductory, basic, fundamental courses are not common.

The professors' salaries are so low that many are forced to teach in two institutions, or write, to augment their incomes. Formerly the professors often failed to meet classes for several weeks, and students would finally stop coming entirely. Now, each professor is required daily to sign an official roll-book, kept in the Faculty Commons Room, and his pay for the month is based on the record thus kept.

All admission to Korean universities is based upon quite difficult entrance examinations. For instance, around three thousand high school graduates took the entrance examinations for admission to the Seoul-National University College of Liberal Arts last year, and of this number around five hundred were admitted. I observed to a colleague that it is hard to enter a Korean university, especially Seoul National, but once in, it is easy to stay and obtain a degree; he agreed with me. This lack of attention to classroom activities was indicated by the fact that about December first classes in the University almost ceased meeting, although the vacation did not begin until December 18th. One reason for this was that all the classrooms were unheated. Rather than suffer the cold, professors and students both went home. One of my colleagues went to his classroom and stayed over half an hour, and not a single student appeared.

The students I taught were intelligent but not all were well trained. They knew the fundamentals of mathematics and English grammar. Their knowledge of the Korean language was also of a high order. In the sciences and the social sciences, with the exception of Korean history, they were not so well prepared. During the terms they studied very little, and at examination time they did a great deal of cramming. Since they had no class assignments, there was little for them to study. Often they would absent themselves from the University for a couple of weeks and then come back to pick up what they had missed.

As individuals they were very polite and likeable but, with rare exceptions, too timid to ask questions. I found it difficult to secure class discussions. They considered it bad form to interrupt the lecturer with questions, and very bad form to volunteer for a task. But when I came to know them personally, I found them charming, eager to learn, and very solicitous for our welfare.

Koreans are charming, happy people, so polite and pleasant; and Korea is a lovely land, quite different from the one often pictured by our soldiers. The younger generation, burdened and handicapped as they are, are eager to erase the marks of war, to lighten the burden of poverty which encompasses them, and to make a new Korea in which the solid virtues and talents of her people will appear in their true light. Students are alert to these things; and they look to America to furnish them a pattern. Having almost no campus life, they envy, more than anything else, the full and varied opportunities which American students enjoy.

As a substitute for the rich and varied life on an American campus, there is the endless talk of the tea rooms, which are the clubs of the Far East, the earnest groups which gather in the bookstores, open to the outside air, reading the books they cannot afford to buy, and the little crowds of students sitting around under the trees on the campus, reading and chatting.

It was unintentionally symbolic that at Christmas we gave our faculty friends packets of American flower seeds. They understood the gesture, and one wrote us recently, "The flowers of my garden are still in bloom. My family are always mentioning your kindness whenever they meet around it. You know the language barrier does not count where the heart can speak directly to other hearts."

And so, as visiting professors, Mrs. Howell and I tried to plant a few seeds, hoping that, in our humble way, we might share some of the good things of America with our neighbors in the Land of the Morning Calm.

Chapel Hill Chaff

(Continued from page 1)

else when the janitor came in and picked up the waste basket and the box and carried them out to the waiting garbage truck. When she came to, some minutes later, she and the janitor jumped in his car and took off in search of the truck.

"My heart was in my throat," Mrs. Betts said, "because somewhere in that garbage truck were all my stories and my mailing list and about \$40 from North Carolina writers. About \$30 of this was in \$1 bills clipped together inside an envelope. There was also some change in the envelope.

"Be calm," I said to myself, when we finally caught up with the truck. And I meant to be calm. But by the time I got out of the car and over to the truck and its five attendants I was swearing a blue streak. You have never seen such delighted garbage men. They savored my predicament with more enjoyment than sympathy. "Messy, you sure is tuned up," said one.

"Move over," I replied. I climbed up and we began rooting around among old potato peelings, dripping corn cans, and empty cereal boxes. Finally I found some of the stories. We scumbled with more enthusiasm. One of the men found the proper envelope. "They's a little sweet rattlin' in here," he said, hearing the clink of coins.

The subscription list never was found, and any authors who sent money to Mrs. Betts and have not received Volume 1, Number 2 of "North Carolina Writer" are asked to let her know.

In a conversation about the gaudy rat-race our civilization has turned Christmas into, the Rev. Robert J. McMullen remarked that Thanksgiving should come right after Christmas instead of before it.

"Then we could all give thanks that Christmas is over," he said.

William Baldwin is a commuter who lives in Chapel Hill and operates a barber shop in Pittsboro. Early one morning last week, on his way to Pittsboro, he stopped at Eubanks' Drugstore and handed Clyde Eubanks a dollar and said:

"Please return this to the bank for me when it opens. I cashed a \$50 check there yesterday and asked for it in \$1 bills. I counted it later and found they gave me 51. I counted it three times, just to make sure. I couldn't sleep very well last night because my conscience hurt."

"You can sleep sound tonight," Mr. Eubanks said. "I'll take it right over to the bank as soon as it opens."

Reminded us of the woman taxpayer who sent a letter to the state revenue department saying she cheated on her income tax ten years ago and had slept poorly ever since. She enclosed \$25 and said, "If I don't sleep well now, I'll send the rest."

Come into My Garden

By Mrs. L. L. Huffman

"I would like to give tulip bulbs to a garden-loving friend for Christmas, but I noticed you said to plant them in late November." Mrs. J. C. C., Camden, S. C.

Yes, late November and early December planting is best for tulips because they bloom much earlier when planted at this time. However, I planted them on March 6th one year because I couldn't get around to it sooner and they all bloomed in late May.

But, by late May we have so many other things blooming that they steal the show from tulips, and that is just the reason we like to plant them earlier. Daffodils bloom first, tulips follow after them, but if we wait too long they bloom along with roses, lilies, feverfew, verbena, sweetpeas, and other things which should come after tulips.

If planted a week or two after Christmas, or even early January, and are in good rich soil, they will still have time to

come up and bloom at the regular time, so give as many tulips for Christmas as you wish. Your garden friends will have them for many years to come.

"Do you think tools for gardening would make a gardener happy?" Mrs. L. B. W., Chapin.

Indeed I do. If I did not have one, I would rather have a little garden shovel than anything I know. This shovel is about 8x12 inches and is bent over at the top on either side so that pushing with the foot will not become painful. It can be bought at most hardware stores, and is a priceless tool for a woman; for, with it, spading becomes a pleasure instead of a laboring job.

So many spading jobs are waiting to be done now. Annuals have finished blooming and these beds and borders are ready to be spaded—lift soil out and turn it over. Let it lie in the rough until next spring. Freezing and thawing will condition the soil and in the late part of winter it can easily be spaded and raked, ready for planting again.

"I was interested in the dwarf fruit trees you mentioned and have bought an apple, peach, apricot, plum and pear. Now I want dwarf flowering shrubs. Will you please tell me what I can find in dwarf shrubs?" Mrs. C. W. B., Shelby, N. C.

There are many dwarf flowering shrubs which we do not plant as widely as we should. Dwarf deutzia in both pink and white are gorgeous little shrubs which bloom just after azaleas and make as great a show. You can get these from State Bros. Nursery, Louisiana, Mo.

loving care. I would like a horse that would grow old with me. My Sealed bid is \$24.03, but maybe by the time you open the bids I have earned some more money I can pay a little higher.

Sincerely Yours
Karen Ann McGuire
P. S. My place is called Bramble Hill.

The book is finely illustrated with pictures of Karen Ann and her new horse and a reproduction of her letter to the bank and a drawing of Nashua by her.

Miss Caffrey is to be commended for this delightful book. Perhaps we need more books

Letter to Editor

Dear Sir,

We want to thank you for the fine publicity you gave us in your paper. Our bazaar was a great success. We have already made \$650.00 and when all the orders for cemetery wreaths are filled, we think we may almost reach \$700.00. We feel that this was largely due to the help and cooperation of friends like you and we do greatly appreciate it.

Sincerely
Annie S. Cameron
Publicity Chairman
St. Matthew's Parish Guild
Hillsboro, N. C.

on the faith of children.

OTHER PEOPLE'S HOUSES. By Tad Mosel. Simon and Schuster, New York. 243 pp. \$3.95.

The author writes, "Never before has there been a medium so suited to what I call the 'personal drama,' that is, a play wherein the writer explores one simple happening, a day, or even an hour, and tries to suggest a complete life...."

Television cannot evoke the same response in every writer, but Mr. Mosel is not prescribing for anyone but himself.

In his plays, the author deals with the joys and sadnesses of the ordinary man, the man who is 50 and is losing his success at business, the woman who goes at great length to hold a formal lawn party, what a family can do about an aging father and the misunderstanding between a father, daughter and potential stepmother.

Mr. Mosel's plays have been on "Philco Television Playhouse," "Goodyear Television Playhouse" and "Playwrights '56."

Recent reprints in the Universal Library Series by Grosset & Dunlap, New York.

THE WEB AND THE ROCK. By Thomas Wolfe. \$1.45.

THE PURITAN OLIGARCHY. By Thomas Jefferson Wertenbaker. \$0.95.

THE DANCE OF LIFE. By Havelock Ellis. \$0.95.

CHRIST STOPPED AT ABOL. By Carl Levi. \$0.95.

Production of blue-cured tobacco in North Carolina from the crop of 1956, forecast on July 1, at 783,925,000 pounds, would be 20 per cent below the record production in 1955.

I Like Chapel Hill

By Billy Arthur

Dr. Ed Hedgpeth was telling about the popular Henry Merritt, a colored campus employe of several decades ago, being about one of the most polite people he ever knew.

While the good doctor was in school, his father came to visit him and they espied Henry coming across the campus. They called to him, and as he approached he removed his hat and bowed.

"You're the most polite man I ever saw," Dr. Hedgpeth quoted his father as saying to Henry.

"Well, sir, I'll tell you," Henry replied, "I found out years ago that good manners will get you places that money won't."

Add things I'd like to see and hear: Spike Jones directing the N. C. Symphony with Victor Borge as piano soloist.

Life is getting to be complicated around our house.

For instance, the other day the Missus carted our four-year-old to Durham, and as they passed Ellis-Stone Co. she called out the name of the place. Upon their releasing the store, Buba wanted to go buy some rocks.

His association of stone and rocks didn't dawn upon her until she got home.

Then the other morning the deliveryman had left the paper at the foot of the drive in the rain, and the Missus remarked, "If he doesn't put the paper on the porch, we'll fire him."

Whereupon Annis Lillian spoke up, "Yes, mama, we'll get some matches and paper and burn him good."

"Not that," the Missus tried to explain. "We meant we'll discharge him."

"What's discharge, mama?" she asked.

"I mean we'll stop taking the paper."

"We ain't gonna set fire to him?"

"No."

"That ain't nice, is it?"

"No. Say, Annis, what do you reckon you'll do in school today?" Then, to me: "Got to get out of that one some way or the other."

It's not always necessary to speak your mind. Oft-times it's not worth speaking.

It takes a live fish to swim against the current, but even a dead one can float with it.

The Blue Ridge Parkway is like a business man's life. It has its quick turns, up and downs, fears and joys, and a beautiful memory of the entire trip.

We don't need an Eleventh Commandment. We have ten too many already.

We quite often get the idea that some public relations men prefer to promote bad causes for good salaries than good causes for bad salaries.

Announcing A Special

CHRISTMAS SALE

on our famous Continental

Pure Linen Braided Rugs



Nationally Advertised NATIONAL CARPETING

This Sale expires Monday, December 31st. Act now for a once-a-year rug value.

This Special Purchase brings you for the first time a 9 x 12 size rug for

\$99⁵⁰ regularly \$129⁵⁰

Other standard sizes available at special sale prices.

Come in Today and Select from Multi-Colored Combinations and Solid Colors. Check these Qualities!

- Mothproof!
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