

1932

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University of New Mexico Press

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### Recommended Citation

University of New Mexico Press. "College Traditions (A Symposium)." *New Mexico Quarterly* 2, 1 (1932).  
<https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/nmq/vol2/iss1/10>

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## College Traditions

(A Symposium)

### MORE AND BETTER TRADITIONS!

**I**N HIS vigorous and arresting manner, Mr. Shaffer makes out a strong case against college traditions, in the article entitled "Too Much Tradition," published in the November number of the New Mexico Quarterly.

Now, though inclined to agree with Mr. Shaffer in some of his contentions, I believe that the cure for the conditions he laments lies, not in the complete smashing of all traditions, but rather in the substitution of better and saner ones.

Unless a college is to be entirely practical and material, with no intrusion of sentiment, some traditions are necessary. Even the humiliating of the new freshmen, though of doubtful spiritual value, does have a definite symbolic meaning. The new student should approach the portals of learning, if not with a green cap on his head, at least with his cap in his hand, as an evidence of his humble and thankful spirit. Of this, the green cap is a symbol. Not less so, are the senseless tasks frequently forced upon freshmen. Here I agree that the enforcement of local traditions should be in the hands of a committee of upperclassmen, instead of being administered, as now, by smarting and revengeful sophomores. But I want traditions.

Not fewer, but more and better traditions, is what a college needs. I propose, therefore, the following, as perhaps substitutes for some of the more objectionable ones:

- I. That faculty members be allowed to cultivate the friendship of students, without being subjected to the suspicion of having ulterior designs on them.

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- II. That students, in turn, be permitted to cultivate freely their professors, without being stigmatized as "apple-polishers."
- III. That the pursuit of knowledge and the cultivation of the things of the spirit, be considered the chief reasons for remaining on the campus.
- V. That these be the virtues most admired and sought after; the sympathetic, friendly spirit; the loving, tender heart; and the tolerant, eager, and inquiring mind.

Give us these as living and growing traditions, and all other things shall be added unto us. I am a sentimentalist? Possibly so! An incorrigible dreamer and hoper, at any rate.

GEORGE ST. CLAIR.

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COLLEGE tradition" can't be found in dictionaries or encyclopedias, nor is it in history or textbooks, although much has been written about it, and many attempts made to define it. But it is a very definite and fundamental part of college life. It is a heritage—the pedigree—of a college. It centers more in old vines, sundials, fences, worn staircases or old brick buildings. It is thinner and less tangible than thin air.

Younger schools have not so much of it; older ones are rich in it. The students at the younger schools are making it without being aware of what they are doing. While it is in the making, it does not exist; the years seem to reach back into the past and bring it out, oftentimes centuries after its inception.

Most prolific in traditions have been the old colleges founded in Pilgrim and Puritan days, along the Atlantic seaboard—William and Mary, Harvard, Yale, King's College (now Columbia). Undoubtedly England's Oxford and Cambridge, and Germany's Heidelberg are even more wealthy in traditions.

Dr. Nicholas Murray Butler, Columbia's venerable president, for years has been collecting what he pleases to call *Columbiana*. This, probably, is the most tangible collection of the evidences of traditions, of any college. A room in the library has been given over for the collection and a curator with assistants appointed to care for the manuscripts and articles—even the old steins of classes which have gone before.

In collecting *Columbiana*, Dr. Arrowsmith, the curator, a Columbia man of the 80's wrote the story of the college that is the heart of Columbia. He told of the black books of the old English school teachers in which they entered misdemeanors of pupils, of the eloquence and leadership of Alexander Hamilton while he was a student, and of the discipline inflicted upon the first students of King's College when it was on the site where now stands the Woolworth building.

This is more what tradition is, although putting it into type robs it of its very essence.

Columbia's first president was a Yale man. He brought with him, the tradition of each class planting ivy along the buildings. Yale is distinctive for its tradition of fences. There is the Senior fence, upon which none but a senior may sit. A portion of the original of this fence survives, and upon it, Yale football and crew captains esconce themselves when they are photographed for the university annual. Another Yale tradition requires all freshmen to wear hats at all times when outside of buildings. Freshmen "pots" at all schools are vestiges of tradition, the customary novitiate of the first year man, and the humility with which he must enter the halls of his chosen Alma Mater.

John D. Rockefeller, Jr., is attempting to reconstruct in stone and brick, the tradition of William and Mary, by the rebuilding of its old campus.

There is always the effort to make of college tradition something concrete and tangible; but it will always be a spirit. It is the most profound and important ingredient of

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an enjoyable, happy, wholly worth-while college life. It is the spur to effort which carries students on to the goal of a diploma and entrance into the cavalcade of graduates who have gone out from the college and left behind Tradition.

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DANA TODD.

What is college tradition?

This is a question asked by many people, especially by those who never have attended college. A college tradition is an unwritten custom, an act repeatedly performed, or a thought frequently commemorated by a college faculty and students; and it is handed down from generation to generation.

In order to appreciate such a practice, one has to be familiar with the history pertaining to the tradition; how it originated and what it represents. Every college has its own traditions which it shelters and nourishes year after year. People, in visiting some of the older schools of the country are not so interested in their fine buildings, but are curious in regard to their traditions—in the history that lies back of the old ivy-covered walls of the chapel, the romantic history back of the "Senior Bench."

The chapel, especially the one with compulsory attendance, is fast disappearing from the college of today. One American college, I have in mind, has no formal chapel, but in its place has a periodic traditional gathering called "S. O. S."—Singing on the Steps. On certain designated evenings, the students meet on the lawn and steps of the Main Hall. There is held a program including music, speeches and introduction of new members. It begins at seven-thirty o'clock, and when the clock in the tower of Main Hall strikes the first stroke of eight o'clock, activity ceases. Silence reigns while the bell clapper sounds the rest of the beats, then the crowd quietly disperses. Although attendance is not compulsory, almost the entire student body comes regularly.

The present generation seems to be abandoning the old traditions which have been adored and honored by men and women of preceding generations. They appear sentimental, trivial and old-fashioned to the modern youth. The present generation wants action and reality! It has no desire to dwell on past ideals and experiences.

It is disheartening to witness the passing of the old and cherished traditions. Their going takes the glamour and individuality away from the modern college. No doubt in years to come, all the colleges of the country will be catalogued strictly according to scholastic standing, and although this may be best from an educational viewpoint, something of great value will be lost. Traditions, sentiments, curious little characteristics which endear them to their students, will disappear. A graduate will not have the same affection in his heart for his "Alma Mater." College life will resolve itself into a mechanical process through which he must pass in order to obtain a degree.

DAN MINNICK.

In a letter to the president of a new western college, a former president of Harvard once wrote:

"The foregoing statements will serve, perhaps, to aid you in the actual administrative functions of the university. The making of the college, however, depends entirely upon 'vines,' or traditions, which grow with the college, and form the foundation for the institution."

Various traditions, or "vines," as the former Harvard president referred to them, are in every college of note in the United States. Newer colleges are forming them in the attempt to add to the spirit of the institution. There, they make their mistake. Traditions are not things which are "made;" they are things which, though they at first seem trivial, grow naturally into importance with the passing of years.

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Some years ago, I attended a small teachers' college in South Dakota. When the institution was founded, it appears, the administrators met and formulated a number of rules which they expected to be the traditions of the future. That they lacked foresight is shown by the type of rules set forth. One, in particular, forbidding smoking on the campus at any time, seems already to be obsolete. Already the "tradition" has been broken, because students refused to accept it.

In my opinion, if traditions are important, they should have the most thorough consideration before they are taken into the by-laws of an institution.

FRANK TSCHOLL.

### Ad Infinitum

By JOHN THOMAS LINKINS

One night the universe poured forth its harmonies.  
Deep they beat and filled my emptiness—  
All of heav'n and all earth's loveliness  
And I were one in these unearthly symphonies.

To die! But I shall live forevermore  
In tones of many loves and lights of eyes—  
To sing to them of all that they adore,  
And live with them their dream of Paradise.

Singing and singing goes my heart—  
Nor can I catch the song  
That takes me from the world apart  
To loves where I belong;  
For this heart, that seemed another's,  
Sang so clearly and so strong.