

★ Article Verse ★ ★

Contributions from the student body.



By Maurice Zolotow.

Bohemia runs rampant

How carefree 'radicals' fostered 'emancipation' and bucked the legislature at Wisconsin U.

New generations of students have rolled over the University of Wisconsin campus—generations more earnest, more tangled in ideologies, more worried about jobs after graduation. Yet the aroma of bohemianism that once rose from Madison still lingers in the national nostrils.

The opinion is still widely current that the climate of that town is favorable to the growth of nuts, queeries and originals. The persistence of this reputation may be taken as a measure of the vitality of the bohemian life once rampant, the reputation of which I can testify is not without foundation.

What a life!

Hundreds of us who lived through that year 1931 with those nine high pitched months still carry the imprint on our souls. Extra legal drinking and sex may have been among the showier ingredients of the year, but they were gestures of higher emancipation.

Legislative investigations of the campus are perennial. Sometimes it is called Bolshevism that is probed. But in 1931-1932 legislative investigations occupied themselves chiefly with charges that free love, and boozing were running rampant on the campus.

And everything they said, I am afraid, was true. Our drinking habits in those days, considering our youthfulness amaze me in retrospect. We bohemians drank copiously of bad wine, synthetic gin, and revolting whisky. Many of us got dead drunk about twice a week—prohibition made it practically our social duty. Free love on the campus was a familiar practice as well as a popular theory.

Four score members.

The prominence of "unconventionals" in the student body was in some measure traceable to Professor Maiklejohn's Experimental college, then in its final year. Without set courses or lectures,

Scrap Irony

Chris Peterson

Moods indigo—pink—and otherwise with accompanying idiosyncrasies.

The thing that most artists like to draw best is their salary. I don't blame them.—The girl who makes her own clothes will never die of overwork.—The sea of matrimony is too expensive with all those permanent waves.—Some people will never get cold feet because they are always in hot water.—If life is just a bowl of cherries, I must be one of the pits.—Women are centipedes when it comes to putting their foot into it.—Advice of the day: Stop, look and less sin.—A critic is a stow-away on somebody else's imagination.—The DAILY'S little session yesterday might well be called "Gripes of Wrath" with compliments to Bob Aldrich.—Some people drink to drown their sorrows—and themselves while they're at it, too.

Had a date the other night with an apparently intelligent lass so tried to make it an intelligent evening. "Do you read Shakespeare's works?" I asked in a scholarly fashion. The answer: "Oh, yes, as fast as they come out." After that I forgot that I even went through kindergarten.—We have a fellow in Blair who is always being beat by his wife. He calls her his "batter half".

Night has fallen and I leave for my frigid hotel where there is no warming love, nothing to inspire hope, and most of all nothing to eat but a crust of bread which the mice and I have shared for a fortnight. Alas.

this college had brought together in one spot at least four score in-tinctive bohemians from many parts of the country. They were a vivacious, talented, carefree group and they infected all who came near them with the virus of their bonhomme and defiance of rules.

Of course they weren't all bohemians. Some came to college for careers and others to capture a mate. But the tone of the institution was set by 200 or 300 out of the 1,000 students. To this minority college was nothing but an adventure for the emancipated spirit.

Their hideout.

Haywood house was a symbol of Madison's bohemianism. A

three story shingled hideaway inhabited by fifteen or so poverty stricken revolutionaries, it boasted no plumbing to speak of, and hardly any furniture. The bathtubs were filled with old books and tennis rackets and the sinks were choked with pipe cleaners and cigarette butts.

The tenants shaved only when the water ran which was about twice a month. They talked instead of eating. They were always thinking of a good issue that would arouse the student body and stimulate social consciousness, but the authorities were too friendly and progressive. It was there that Louis Zukofsky planned and initiated that literary movement known as "Objectivism," which

thereafter attained some importance.

And so the days burned up like the endless cigarettes we smoked as we talked and drank wine and loved and talked some more. May Day we made a festive extravaganza, celebrated alike by communist, neo-Catholic, and dadaist. Hundreds of students gathered outside the dorms and cheered and shrieked and called for destruction and revolution and anything odd they could think of, such as abolition of compulsory gym.

Pelt firemen.

When the police and firemen arrived they were pelted from all windows with water bombs, which are paper bags filled with cold water and guaranteed to give

quite a shock when they burst on an unsuspecting head.

After that, bohemia came to grips with a small time Dies. He dared to come into our very camp to expose free love and Bolshevism on the campus. Bohemia denounced the enemy to his face, heckled him unmercifully, and posed tricky questions. Our answer to all this was to walk out dramatically. Bohemia felt it had decisively defeated middletown.

Considered in retrospect these came through this seemingly wasted days and nights of drinking, talking and flirting, significant pieces of knowledge and insight that would eventually fit themselves into a better education than the one received by students who studied faithfully.

We cultivated a certain inner integrity and mental independence that became increasingly valuable in later years, when all parties began their attempt to militarize and enslave the mind. Certainly no one who ever absorbed a part of bohemia could fall prey to any sort of totalitarianism or regimentation whether from right or left.

Death to the unbeliever

By Art Adams

The old lama rose from his books and went to the window. Across the plain the golden roofs of the Potala Palace shimmered in the sunset. Reverently, he murmured his Tibetan prayer, pancea of all evil. "Om mani padme hung. Om mani padme hung."

Behind him in the maroon robe of a monk, Neil Davies, Master of Arts, and lean faced student of mystery, sat paging over the loose pages of a huge Tibetan volume. The white man shook his head violently and muttered to himself. His fingers drummed incessantly on the bench as he tried painfully to comprehend. Finally with a groan of despair, he pushed the book from him and dropped his head on his arms.

The priest turned to watch him, and waited until he looked up. "You still find it difficult?" he asked.

Belief is hard.

"Impossible, Kali Nyama," said Neil's eyes. "My son," he said, fail to understand, but I cannot believe."

"For you, who have been steeped in the ways of the western world, it is hard. But you are willing, you will yet learn our secrets."

Neil shook his head. "I cannot forget what I have learned in my own schools in America. There we have science. The laws of chemistry and physics are a part of me. You say that you revive the dead, that you can make the spirits serve you, even that you can fly through the air. But, Kali, you refuse to prove these things. I cannot believe them."

Hate unbelievers.

Kali came closer to the bench and looked sympathetically into Neil's eyes. "My son," he said, "we do not disprove your laws. We only divert them to our own purposes."

"The spirits hate the unbeliever. They resent the presence of the skeptic. Before this we have tried to make the skeptic believe by proof, and there have been grave consequences. Some have been killed—"

"I have been here seven months, Kali. And I know that I cannot force myself to believe. I must have proof, though I lose my right arm! I must have proof!"

"Yes, it is true that you have been here many days," said Kali. "And we have become friends. I cannot let you go back to your death. Perhaps a greater lama would try—I cannot. I am sorry." He wrapped the covering cloths over the books and left the cell.

Greater lama helps.

In a few moments he returned and his face was solemn. He spoke very quietly with a hint of sorrow in his voice. "Today while we studied," he said, "a gomchen lama, one of the most famous

among the naljorpas in all Tibet came to the monastery. He knows of your wish. You are to come to the Temple of the Goddess of Death tonight, at midnight. There you will have your proof."

He placed his hand on the white man's shoulder gently. "Neil, for my sake try to believe. Tonight we risk your life."

In silence Neil sat thinking a long time; then he went to the window where he could see the lights of Lhasa, the Holy City of Tibet. Monks, lighted by great smoking torches, made their way across the dark plain to the city.

Will learn secrets

Here for seven months he had pounded his brain with the teachings of these men. He had traveled thousands of arduous miles to learn the secrets of their religion.

He thought of the doctor's degree that awaited him in his own land if his thesis were accepted and of the girl who waited for him. The learned doctors of America would scoff at him if he returned without gaining some new knowledge of this land, but she would welcome him always.

Tonight his dream would come true. He would see the magic of a Tibetan naljorpa. He forced himself to ignore the warning of danger that had been in kali's words.

At midnight, Neil made his way through the dark corridors of the monastery to the Temple of the Death Goddess. Many priests clustered there, chanting a melancholy hymn to the muffled throb of many drums. Kali detached himself from the shadows and came to Neil; together they entered the temple.

Clad in loincloth

The ancient naljorpa, seated before the altar, was clad only in a loin cloth. His grey hair fell over his shoulders and covered his bosom. He nodded a greeting and motioned them to their places on each side of his mat. They sat thus, in a triangular three yards apart the Jomchen lama at the peak, their own bodies at the angles of the base.

On the altar, seven butter lamps lighted the fat, repulsive body of the Death Goddess. Neil noticed grimly that the polished skulls of men served as the bases of these lamps.

Between Kali and himself a short wooden plank, almost two inches thick, lay propped against a copper-prayer bowl. And in the center of the triangle an intricately carved wooden box had been set. Its contents were covered with fine silk, Kali made a furtive gesture to him as if to tell him to watch the box carefully.

Goes into trance

Outside the temple the chant of the lamas fell to a mournful dirge. It receded until only the sound of

the drums remained, and mingled their throbbing notes with the beat of his heart.

The seamed face of the naljorpa took on a deathly pallor under its deep bronze. His eyes closed and he seemed to stop breathing, though Neil sensed the beat of his pulse under the taut skin of his temple. He began to breathe heavily and Neil realized that the lama had entered a trance.

A movement in the box caught his eye, and he watched while iridescent silks slowly unfolded and fell to the floor. Revealed in its bed of gold, lay a dagger—long and thin bladed—its hilt set with rough uncut jewels. He recognized it as a purba, one of the magic daggers that are wielded by the spirits of dead men. And he remembered with a shiver of fear running through his body, that the deadly purba of Lhasa was said to have killed twelve men.

Knife strikes

His skin grew taut as the purba floated from the box and went with inexorable slowness until it hovered above the plank. As though it were being driven by some gigantic hand it sank into the wood. Its hilt moved up once then down as if the hand that held it were loosening it before drawing it forth. It hung motionless in the air a moment, poised above the slab and sank deeply into the wood again until fully three inches of its blade had penetrated.

With his first suspicious thought, Neil leaned sideways so that he could see behind the slab. The point had emerged there, but the little germ of doubt multiplied in his mind, and he began unconsciously to analyze—to observe coolly.

The hilt traveled up and down once more, and the knife was drawn from the wood. Then it floated back to its box and paused there uncertainly. As if making a sudden decision, it turned and began to move toward Neil.

Strong unseen hands seemed to envelop him. He felt himself pushed backwards until he lay stretched out on his back. He tried desperately to rise but the power that forced the breath from his lungs was irresistible. He could not move. He attempted to speak, to cry out, but he made no sound. Fearfully, he lay and watched the deadly purba poised above him. It began its implacable slow movement toward his throat, and he watched with fascinated staring eyes.

With a cry of horror, Kali was at his side. He grasped the dagger by its hilt and tried to divert it from its victim. He tugged and twisted and fought, but the dagger did not move from its mur-

derous course. He clutched the blade of the purba with both hands and struggled furiously against the malevolent thing, but it moved forward by slow inches. Screaming hysterical prayers, Kali stood astride Neil's body with the devilish thing in his hands and begged it to stop. Neil watched the blood stream from the hands of his teacher and felt the hot, red liquid drip on his face. He measured the inches left for the knife to travel and gave himself up as dead.

Something forced him to turn away from the knife that poised so near to his throat. He turned his face toward the gomchen lama. Sweat stood out on the magician's forehead, and he seemed to struggle for each breath. His hands, that had been placed before him on his knees in the fashion of the Buddhist, were clenched tightly in his lap. His eyes were open now. They drew Neil's attention burning their way into his consciousness, making him forget the awful danger that hovered above him. Trying to tell him something—

In desperation, he tried to get the lama's message. Like the brief flare of a match in darkness, the thought flickered in his mind. He realized suddenly, that his life depended upon that thought. It flashed across his brain. "It is best—It is best to—He forced his own brain to forget everything but that idea, to concentrate on the lama's message. It burst in his brain, painted in flaming letters. "It is best to believe what you cannot explain."

The logic of the quotation met and defeated the logic of his own world. He exhaled inwardly and tried to speak. His voice returned. "I do believe!" he shouted.

The terrible pressure on his chest relaxed. His arms were released. He sat up as the purba lifted and floated back to the box. The silk folded over it, and for a moment only the sound of Kali's sobbing was in the air.

He watched the gomchen lama change from a pale spectre into a very tired and shaken old man. The lama rose and covered the box. Together, they carried Kali to his cell and bandaged his hands. He lay on his mat and peered hopefully into Neil's eyes. "Nya Cyalo," he said. "The Gods have won. You believe at last."

"Yes, Kali," said Neil. "Your Gods have won. Tomorrow we can begin our studies anew." But Kali shook his old head slowly, and held his bandaged hands before him like two white doves. "There is your proof," he said. "There is nothing more for you to learn. You must return to your country now, and tell them what you have seen."

