

WERE THOSE THE DAYS?

*Some reminders of the time when
unsophistication was in flower at Tech*

Those who visit the basement offices of the undergraduate newspaper, *The California Tech*, (mainstay of southern California's thriving yellow press) will notice a large and untidy sprawl of papers on the forward tables. These are old *California Techs*, dating back to 1918, when the paper was called the *Throop Tech*.

It seems things were different in the old days. For instance, student sophistication and cynicism had not reached their present high levels — as indicated in this excerpt from the front page of the *California Tech* for October 9, 1924.

HELLO!

by H. Fred Peterson

Crack your shell and step outside.

“Don't be another nut,”

Smile and show your sunny side

And leave that gloomy rut.

Smile and say “Hello, old top,”

To everyone you meet

Don't move so fast you cannot stop

An old time friend to greet.

Let's make “Hello” our slogan here,

And use it everywhere,

And watch it spread good natured cheer

And liven up the air.

You do not have to know a chap —

Say “Hello” any way.

And watch the smile spread on his map —

You'll feel that's plenty pay!

(Someone has made an attempt to pencil out the last line and substitute, “Then kick him and run away.”)

Further down the page is an article headlined

ROOTING CAPS FOR TECHMEN

... rooting caps are to be purchased for the entire

student body, including freshmen. The standard orange and white gob caps were considered the best.

Contrast that with the spirit of contemporary Tech men, who have been known to scratch the school's name off their bluebooks.

Here's an interesting column filler from the same issue:

The most expensive chair in the world — made of solid silver and worth about \$6000 — belongs to the Pope. He uses it to sit on.

Advertising, struggling to make a go of it without motivational research, tended to be moralistic in content. Take as an example the Western Electric ad of April 24, 1923:

CAKE EATER — *model of 1900*

He was called dude and dandy then, but you recognize the type.

He majored in haberdashery and took his degree with honors in soxology.

As if that were not enough, he evolved some variations on the cake walk which made them stare.

He even found time to develop a remarkable proficiency on the tandem bicycle, and on Saturday nights he was good enough to bring pleasure into Another's life by wheeling away to the “Ten-Twent-Third.”

To crowd all this into four short years would seem enough for any mortal. Yet in spite of his attainments there are times, in after life, when our hero wonders.

The glory of his waistcoats has long since faded, while his books are still fresh and clean. Did he perchance put too much thought into the selection of his hats and too little in what went under them?

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This prejudice against wearables was not universal. The next page is half occupied by Silverwoods:

Was a time when if a man had one sweater he was all the "berries" . . . Now many men have as many as a dozen sweaters — and haunt our great sweater department for new arrivals . . . Better come in and say what so many men aim at us on the first visit, "Golly, I never knew there were so many sweaters in all the world."

Of course life was not all sweaters. There were human elements, also. We find next to the Western Electric ad:

PHAROS SURPRISE DOC GARNER

Thursday afternoon the Pharos (*a fraternity*) found out where Doc Garner and his charming bride were to be for the evening and went in a body to surprise the couple. Doc was taken out of the house where a party was in progress and surrounded by his friends. In spite of the fact that they were his friends, Doc was evidently badly scared and when asked for an introduction to the wife, pleaded for time to calm himself. After introductions the young couple were given the best wishes for a happy life.

Thus we have the picture of hardworking, straightforward folk, unafraid and unashamed to display emotion when emotion was called for. Even the president of the Institute, James A. B. Scherer, sometimes felt called upon to use more than scientific prose. Here he comments on the change of the school's name from Throop College of Technology to California Institute of Technology on February 16, 1920:

. . . Convinced that this change should be made, the Trustees felt equally assured that the name of "Father Throop" must be perpetually commemorated, both for his own sake and the sake of his noteworthy educational ideals. The city where he lived and which he loved is therefore called upon, as it were, to pay him a beautiful tribute by the transformation of "Pasadena Hall" to "Throop Hall" forever.

Even so, sentiment for the moment is sacrificed, as long association had made the old name dear to all of us. Nevertheless I have myself yet to hear from any source aught but enthusiastic acknowledgement of the fact that the Trustees by their unanimous vote on last Tuesday gave the most appropriate possible recognition to the splendid new era which justifies our splendid new name. We have sailed down the river, and now we launch into the deep.

(Ill health soon forced Dr. Scherer to resign from the presidency. In the *Tech* of September 25, 1920, he outlines his plans for the future:

"No sooner did it become clear that I must seek a change of occupation than I turned to writing which has enticed me since childhood. Writers naturally desire readers. The contemporary photoplay of the

better sort affords an army of readers unique in the history of writing. I shall, therefore, endeavor to use the screen, as well as the printed page, as a means of expression."

He was immediately signed to a long-term contract by the Famous-Lasky Corporation.)

Yes, emotion ran high in those now-lost days, and along with emotion ran school spirit. There was little toleration of "really care" or obstructionist attitudes. The following is quoted from the *Throop Tech* editorial of November 5, 1919, entitled:

LET'S CAN THE 2.75*

At the Indian game Saturday, some square-faced hulk in the grandstand yelled out that the team had no fight; another bar-fly bellowed to one of the players — "Whad ya think y' ar, one of the umps?" If this is Throop spirit a Kentucky "soak" could get drunk on buttermilk.

We admit the team didn't show the class and the speed they are capable of — BUT — they DID NOT lay down — they DID NOT quit when luck turned against them. Maybe they weren't in the best of condition, but how many of the fellows in the bleachers bawling out their own men — how many of them ever gave up ANYTHING for Throop? . . . BUT — We ARE NOT insinuating that all, or by any means the majority of Throop supporters Saturday showed this raspberry spirit. But there was so much of it apparent that it was hard to distinguish the REAL spirit. And if any such "bush league" stunts are pulled off in the future it is the right, obligation, and duty of every loyal Throop man to mob the offender or be placed in the same class himself.

Maybe all this poor spirit is thoughtlessness, maybe it's lack of appreciation of the true Throop spirit, but what's more, it's going to be STOPPED. To fellows with the real Throop spirit it is obnoxious. And incidentally, the Student Board of Control has a great deal of power and a little publication would make it pretty difficult for the offender to enter any other college in this part of the country.

. . . When Oxy played USC Saturday, they came out holding on to the goose-egg end of a 27-0 score. And did the Oxy supporters once yell "Where's the fight?" No — they cheered their team to the skies (even when their quarter fumbled a kick and a USC man went over for a touchdown).

Now, we're not applauding Oxy; but we are showing WHAT the team — OUR TEAM — must fight next Saturday. And ARE we going to let them fight ALONE or is EVERY man in the TCT student body and faculty going to do his part to redeem for last Saturday?

If any MAN in Throop won't do this much for his Alma Mater, he's dead. DEAD from the neck — BOTH WAYS! And the Tech will gladly pay for the plot of ground, a pot of lilies, and as an added inducement, will print the obituary notice free of charge.

Come on Throop! LET'S SNAP OUT OF IT!

We never have snapped out of it.

—Brad Efron '60

*2.75 equals alcohol content of near-beer.