

# THE UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA

BY WILLIAM HINES AND EDWARD COTTRELL

**I**F COLGATE WHITEHEAD DARDEN, JR., A.B., M.A., LL. B., the President of the University of Virginia, had come to Charlottesville in 1947 expecting to run the show by himself the chances are that his successor would be well broken in by now. But Mr. Darden, a smart main-bearing in the Harry F. Byrd machine, knows his University tradition as well as he knows his Commonwealth politics. Thus his knowledge that you can disregard Thomas Jefferson in Charlottesville about as successfully as you can fight Frank Hague in Jersey City stood him in good stead. Darden joined hands with the shade of Mr. Jefferson at the start of his tenure as President and together the two are leading the University to new heights in the scholastic world. A third high-powered figure, Fleet Admiral William F. Halsey, 'oo, is concurrently teamed with the spirit of Founder Jefferson to raise \$28 million for a University development fund.

Not that the University of Virginia, at first glance, seems to need much

development. It is Olympian in its supremacy in Dixie in the field of law, high among the medical schools south of the Potomac, tops in the area in general scholastic rank and on its way up nationally in such crucial fields as Engineering, Science and Football.

Whoever may be President and whoever may be Rector — Edward R. Stettinius, Jr., is the latter incumbent — there is only one Founder, and the story of the University is the story of a man dead a century and a quarter yet as vibrantly alive as the 51-year-old former Virginia governor who helps him run the place.

Mr. Jefferson — there is always a certain formality at Charlottesville in invoking the beneficent ghost — left his University a precept which, while less terse than the “VERITAS” of Harvard, is more explicit:

This institution will be based on the illimitable freedom of the human mind. For here we are not afraid to follow truth wherever it may lead, nor to tolerate error as long as reason is left free to combat it.

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So thoroughly imbued with this precept are staff, faculty and students that if Mr. Jefferson's tangible handiwork, the indescribably lovely Lawn, were to disappear tomorrow in a cloud of atomic dust, the University would inevitably rise again, still spreading the greater glory of Tom Jefferson's God of Truth. The physical plant might differ from today's — though the thought is so startling to esthetes as to be repugnant — but the realities of Virginia would not change.

The University's verities are as many-sided as the old man who built at Charlottesville the framework of a century's tradition. Hand in hand with Jeffersonian skepticism is a spirit which calls men like Kinsolving and Tucker to the Altar of God. The University makes lawyers — like Woodrow Wilson and Stanley Reed; editors — like Virginius Dabney of the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* and Reuben Maury of the *New York Daily News*; soldiers of war like Vandergrift and soldiers of peace like Walter Reed; young liberals like Frank Roosevelt, Jr. and young conservatives like Fulton Lewis, Jr.; high-octane businessmen like Robert R. Young and high-octane explorers like Richard E. Byrd.

What is done at Charlottesville by the University administration and at Richmond by remote control in the legislature is dictated in large measure by "what Mr. Jefferson would have done." And what is done by the student body is influenced by Mr.

Jefferson, the Honor System and the Mason Jar.

Mr. Jefferson believed firmly that the least government was the best government. He also believed — popular legend to the contrary — that democracy was hokum and that the hope of the land lay in an agricultural economy presided over by aristocrats of the mind. He was himself a man of probity — Jefferson scholars point to the fact that their hero died broke rather than advantage himself in real estate deals to which he was privy while Washington made his millions speculating in land — and put honor above all else. He believed further that "where wine is cheap, there is little drunkenness."

## II

It is unfortunate but true that all of Jefferson's precepts could not be held inviolate through the years. When young blades began shooting college professors (this was a century ago), discipline had to be imposed, though to a limited extent. His plan to select "the best geniuses" of the day for attendance at Charlottesville was not always feasible, but the University has compensated by making a diploma relatively hard to get and steering clear of the commercialized shoals of the honorary degree. Wine — or its latter day equivalents, corn whiskey and commercial blends — is cheap at Virginia, but drunkenness is far from unknown.

But one Jeffersonian ideal, that of honor, has remained unsullied. About

a hundred years ago an Honor System was instituted which today, more than anything at the University save Jefferson himself, rules the daily activities of the overcrowded student body of 5000.

Here, in a nutshell, is the Honor System:

It is considered a breach of honor to cheat, either in schoolwork or in any other relations with students or the University, to lie, to steal or in some cases to wilfully cash bad checks. It is argued by many that it is unbecoming a gentleman to get drunk and to be guilty of flagrant immorality in other lines but it must be noted at once that such conduct may be shocking and reprehensible in the extreme but it is not dishonorable. Other things such as breach of University discipline and failure to pay debts are to be deplored and should be discouraged but they can never be put under the jurisdiction of the Honor System because they are not themselves dishonorable. The Honor System deals with dishonest conduct alone and if anything is put under its protection which is not dishonorable or if things not inherently dishonorable are tried to be made so by legislation it will invariably result in the breaking down of the whole fabric of the System and robbing it of its power even over true breaches of honor.

Eschewing stool pigeons or a student Gestapo, the System relies on the feeling among students that a breach of honor is a personal insult. A student, observing another in the act of cheating, can — and does — demand that the offender explain his actions or resign from the University. The observer does not “turn in” the cheater. If the confronted student feels he has been unjustly accused, he may appeal to the Honor Committee,

a student group composed of the presidents of the five University departments and the vice-president of the department in which the suspect is enrolled. If, after hearing the evidence, the Honor Committee feels the System has been violated, the University Registrar is notified and the offender quits school forthwith. There is no tone of gray between black and white in a matter of honor. Either the accused is guilty and leaves school, or he is innocent and his record is unblemished.

Although the University officials do not meddle in the Honor System, they frequently bring disciplinary offenders under the provisions of the code as good conduct insurance. A campus drunk will be required to sign a drinking pledge which, if violated, besmirches his honor. University athletics are not a constant arena of conflict between players and coach on the subject of training, because an athlete signs a “training pledge” and thereafter is on his own.

It was Honor System indoctrination which caused the Cavaliers, in 1935, to withdraw from the Southern Football Conference. In that year a rule was adopted requiring each player to stipulate that he was not subsidized. Virginia, though comparatively tight-fisted with football scholarships, did nevertheless grant aid to athletes, though with the proviso that they attend classes and keep up in their grades. The University was faced by a dilemma: it did not wish to discontinue paying footballers,

but on the other hand it would not require its athletes to sign false statements. The only solution was withdrawal from a Conference which still subscribes to the no-subsidy rule and produces such teams as Duke and North Carolina.

### III

"Never make the mistake of underestimating the importance of the Mason Jar," a sage observer of University affairs once commented. His mystical allusion was to the unusually high alcoholic content of the University's social life. The common, wide-mouthed Mason Jar, used in the North for home canning, is in the South the traditional container for illicitly distilled corn whisky from the Valley of Virginia. Of late, with the advent of the Albemarle Boys Club, the Mason Jar has become more a symbol of the thing than the thing itself. The Boys Club, its name synthesized from the name of the county in which Charlottesville lies and the initials of the state's Alcoholic Beverage Control, or liquor monopoly, offers standard brands of commercial whisky at about \$3 a fifth.

Neither drinking nor "flagrant immorality in other lines" is an organized activity at the University. The laissez-faire attitude of the University allows a youth to matriculate with a view to making a lecher of himself, and lets him also hold fast to old home ideals and absorb learning without interference from less abstemious students. Liquor is held by

the students to be one of their inalienable rights, and the company of the fair sex is considered another.

There is a baseless legend that Jefferson was drunk when he laid out the serpentine walls, and that these walls are one brick wide because brick clay was scarce (the earth is literally made of it in Charlottesville). Another University myth is accepted, perhaps wishfully, by the student body. This story holds that when Jefferson designed the Grounds he provided brothels for his lusty young men by erecting the two lines of low dormitory cells known as The Ranges. Though Edgar Allen Poe might not mind the story, the highly moral Woodrow Wilson must twitch in his grave each time it is repeated. Both Poe and Wilson lived in the West Range in their student days.

That bawdy houses were authorized in the University charter is held by students to be documented fact. But examination of the charter fails to give either explicit or implicit credence to the rumors. There is little doubt, however, that the Ranges have been used from time to time for the purpose for which legend says they were intended. It is almost non-existent now, but before the late war miscegenation was a rather popular peccadillo. It is accepted by University officials as a regrettable fact that before World War II many voluptuous light-skinned girls of the town used to frequent the Range rooms on prostitution bent, introducing themselves to the students as girls in quest

of laundry for their mothers' washboards. Often as not they were admitted to the rooms as welcome respite from a hard session with the books.

There has been no faculty campaign to stamp out such prostitution, and as far as can be determined, no student boycott of the opposite sex of the opposite hue. University spokesmen are inclined to believe that public opinion within the Negro community has forced the girls to abandon their commerce. Informed Negroes, on the other hand, doubt that the Negro section of Charlottesville is sufficiently unified for public opinion to jell effectively.

Regarding the white-Negro question, cohabitation has never been as great a worry to the University as Negro education. In the light of the Oklahoma case, in which a young Negro woman won the right to attend law courses equal to those given at the University of Oklahoma, the subject of segregation is under examination at the University, though not without the hope that the issue can be avoided. In justice to the University it must be remembered that the school is a creature of the Commonwealth and thus — regardless of the feelings of the faculty and students on the race question — must await the nod of the state government before taking any steps in the direction of racial equality. On the other hand, there is little or no desire on the University's part to alter the *status quo*, and inasmuch as President

Darden is a former Virginia governor of the same political complexion as the present administration, there is no reason to think that the University is a millimeter ahead of the state in contemplation of the co-education question.

Among the students there is quite general anti-Negro feeling, ranging from a passive disinclination to share their University to an active feeling of alarm over the possibility. The extreme of the lynch mob, however, is non-evident.

On the question of a practical application of the Oklahoma case, students feel that a Negro attending the University with the force of law behind him would experience ostracism at the hands of students. But probably more to the point (since a Negro would come to the University prepared for his probable social reception), the students believe and the officials do not attempt to deny that instructors and professors would exert continuous efforts to force the Negro student out of school.

President Darden is a segregation man — “as long as segregation isn't used, as it frequently is, as a means of oppression.” Darden's words on Negro education are these:

Under the Oklahoma ruling, colleges of equal rank must be provided or Negroes must be admitted to the University of Virginia. What will be done in this regard is a legislative matter. The emotional aspects of this question are inescapable. Personally, I do not feel that it is necessary to co-educate Negro and white. I believe some sort of regional school, where

Negroes could be assured a high level of undergraduate and graduate education would be more satisfactory from every standpoint. I think the Negro would be happier that way.

Though Negroes consider themselves better qualified than Mr. Darden to talk of their pursuit of happiness, the middle-of-the-road Negro agrees that for the present a pragmatic approach to education would dictate avoidance of a hostile campus. Ideally, the Negro holds, mixed education now would be desirable as a part of the effort to bring understanding between the races, but practically it would be difficult for a Negro to make his way at Charlottesville. Darden believes that "the Negro will move more rapidly given his own way than if he intermingles with the white." There is no doubt that the University administration agrees with its students that co-education of the races would not work.

Which gives rise to a situation difficult of analysis and impossible of explanation. Yearly, the University assimilates numerous Puerto Ricans, many of them dark of skin and Negroid of feature. Like the Charlottesville Negro, they are American citizens. Like him again, many of the Puerto Ricans have more than one-sixteenth Negro blood, and under Virginia segregation statutes apparently are proscribed from public assembly with whites. Yet, they attend white classes, study in white libraries, and, while they move argely in their own circles, do not

experience active hostility at the hands of either faculty or student body. Such is the logic of the dreamy Southland that the Negro from one political subdivision of the United States can attend the University with impunity, while a Negro of equal mental qualifications from another section cannot.

Naturally less evident than feeling on the race question is the attitude at the University regarding religious minorities. Ivy League anti-Catholicism is simply non-existent, and antipathy toward Jews as a group is hardly to be found without careful investigation. That the University administration is aware of the existence of two broad phyla, Jew and Gentile, is evidenced in a small, sly way which hardly does justice to the tolerant soul of Mr. Jefferson. As one University official explained it:

We have in the rules of the University a provision that any non-Virginian seeking to matriculate must appear in person before a regional admissions board. The only place that this is invariably enforced, year in and year out, is New York City.

Alumni pressure of a strange sort is credited with keeping the New York rule inflexible. According to the same University spokesman, Sephardic Jews of the old South have repeatedly turned the heat on the administration to keep *Ashkenazim* of the North out of Charlottesville. Though this may be an accurate apologia, a perusal of alumni lists reveals more Goldbergs and Rosenthals than Cardozos and Solis Cohens among the University's

southern graduates. This, however, is about as far as anti-Semitism goes. Students of whatever religious persuasion are accepted wholeheartedly by their fellows on the one basis of which Mr. Jefferson would approve: that of personality.

## IV

Politically, the student body at Charlottesville is what a Marxist would term "immature," meaning that there are no Communist influences evident on the Grounds. Neither faculty nor students know of any enrolled Communists, and fellow-travelers are so few in number that when a Henry Wallace club was organized during fraternity Rush Week last spring, eleven students signed up. Meanwhile, the fraternities pledged 176.

The doctrinaire Progressivism of the Wallaceites would never have been approved by Mr. Jefferson; hence it is not approved by the University. One of the top Jefferson men speculates thus:

If Jefferson were alive today I don't believe he'd be either a Wallace or a Taft; he'd probably be a hell of a lot better than either of them.

Politically-minded students of the extreme left are unpopular at Virginia for a curious reason. Though they are vouchsafed their right to genuflect to Marx and Engels, their non-conformity in matters of dress is held against them. "These screwballs go around in their shirtsleeves," is the

common complaint against the Wallaceites.

Shirtsleeves are as out of place at the University as they would be in the Supreme Court. If a University rule dictated jackets and neckties, the individualists of the student body would likely wear T-shirts as a matter of principle. But public opinion dictates a University uniform which would mark a Charlottesville student wherever he might go. Though the basic requirement is coat and tie, the most popular costume is a seersucker jacket, gray flannel trousers, dirty white buckskin shoes, a white shirt, black knitted tie and a bare head. Zoot costumes are taboo and coatlessness is permissible only on occasions when a football hero wishes to show off his athletic letter.

Mr. Jefferson founded his school for leaders, and leaders today get the top honors. Omicron Delta Kappa, the honorary leadership fraternity, overshadows Phi Beta Kappa almost to the latter's extinction. A baker's dozen of the top student leaders comprise what is known as "Thirteen" and these men are the aristocrats of the University. The feeling about Phi Beta Kappa, pretty generally expressed, is that if all one wants out of college is a PBK key, he can get it by grinding his nose into books for four years. On the other hand, the students feel, it takes a real man to be admitted to the leadership élite.

The present student enrollment of slightly over 5000 is near, if not at,



the anticipated all-time peak. Personnel experts at the University believe the demands of veterans for education under the GI Bill of Rights have about run their course, but no one looks for a return of the prewar enrollment of 3000.

Financially the pinch is on hundreds of University men, for Mr. Jefferson's control over ideals is not equaled by his control over prices. While it is just barely possible for a student, aided by the GI Bill, to get by on about \$1000 an academic year, twice that figure is the minimum for anyone attempting to mix his business with a modicum of pleasure. A full-scale week-end date with a girl from "over the hump" at Mary Baldwin College may run to \$75. Automobile expenses — not an inconsiderable tab on a campus where nearly half the students own cars — also are a big item. What with such young worthies as Sam Goldwyn, Jr., whose activities at the University are almost as legendary as those of Edgar Allen Poe, the University has had its share of men with money to toss around. A law student there during the war paid \$65,000 for a home for his family.

It is not for such as these that the University is waging a fairly successful anti-inflation battle. President Darden has already made of himself something of a saint by cleaning up the University Commons and instituting a low-price menu which features a \$.40 steak. His victory has forced prices down to some extent in the town, but Darden is too well aware of

the University's need for the good will of civic leaders to admit that this was one of his objects in slashing prices at the Commons.

Considerable student aid is available to ease the lot of hard-hit, deserving men. The personnel office operates aggressively and efficiently, particularly on behalf of married students, some of whom manage in some unimaginable fashion to support their families on as little as \$135 a month, including all college expenses of the student *paterfamilias*. These couples on the financial borderline are a constant source of concern not only to themselves but to the University, for many of them exist in a sub-standard fashion and experience actual want — though not starvation — in their quest for the magic college diploma.

Possession of this open sesame, the sheepskin, gives a young man big ideas. Rare indeed is the youth who confers with the personnel people on his post-graduation plans without expressing the belief that "If I'm not making \$20,000 a year in five years I'll consider myself a flop." Whether the class of 1943 has developed an inferiority complex or has revised its ideas in the interim is not a matter of record.

Law students, by and large, have the most grandiose ideas. The University of Virginia boasts one of the finest law schools in the country, and its reputation has given Virginia "lawyers" a strange megalomania. "They don't seem to realize," a



placement counselor says, "that right now lawyers are a drug on the market." One Virginia Law student, in his last days at the University, was offered a training job with a large New York bank, the terms being 55 weeks of training at \$50 a week, plus lunch, and broad horizons for advancement. He turned it down. "I've been thinking of \$3600 a year to start and can't consider less," he said.

Medical students at the University's excellent hospital center have little trouble finding suitable spots, both for internship and post-interne activities. Most of them — predominantly Virginians due to provisions of the Medical School charter — come to Charlottesville full of youth, fire and a desire to be an old country doc. Somewhere along the line their outlook changes and most of them graduate planning to take residencies and gain certification as high-priced specialists.

More humility is displayed by B.S. and A.B. candidates than by any other group of University students. For their benefit primarily the University has concluded a widespread set of agreements with industry, and Charlottesville is a "must" stop in

the rounds of the talent scouts of the business world. Graduates are well thought of in commerce because it is known that a University of Virginia diploma indicates a moderately high degree of attention to duty. The almost total lack of faculty supervision puts a man on his mettle, with the result that many are called but few are chosen. Those who fail to graduate are of two major categories: the ones who are incapable of mixing their books and their Mason Jar, and the ones who lose interest in midpassage. Offenders against the Honor System are few in number.

So jealously is the scholastic reputation guarded that Virginia grants no honorary degrees. A politician who wishes to speak at Charlottesville — as Roosevelt did on the occasion of his "Stab in the Back" address — is always given the freedom of the Grounds, but never an honorary LL.D.

"It takes a man to get through here," a student leader sums it up. "And in spite of all this drinking and carousing and going over the hump to Mary Baldwin, this place turns out some of the best damned preachers in the South."

## MARGINAL NOTE

BY MARGERY MANSFIELD

Knowing truth or beauty  
Is knowing God, in a fashion,  
Truth is the law of God.  
Beauty is God's compassion.