

CHAPTER 4

CAMPUS NEWS

WHAT news is cannot be learned by studying a book or hearing lectures. The beginning reporter-writer must acquire that knowledge by gathering news and writing news and doing it again and again.

For a student in a journalistic writing course, his laboratory is the college or university campus and the surrounding community.

Fortunately for that student, the campus and community provide an excellent field for gathering and writing news of any kind, either general or technical in character. This is particularly true on a campus where there are different schools, colleges, or divisions, agricultural and engineering experiment stations, and research in technical and science fields.

To make sure that the student understands these possibilities of gathering and writing news on the campus, this chapter is included in the book as a brief inventory or guide.

Considering news, first, as something that happens, then almost any kind of news under the sun may be found at one time or another on a campus or in its surrounding community and having some connection with faculty and students. A college is in itself a rather complete community, made up of many kinds of people with widely diversified interests and activities.

To illustrate, a college or university is a center of amateur athletics affording a considerable wealth of news. The community is highly organized, with many faculty and student groups which meet and carry on diverse activities in which there is news. The campus has its social life, its contests and rivalries, its movements, welfare campaigns, politics, elections, crusades, religious enterprises, business undertakings—all providing happenings without end. Even such a thing as how students dress becomes news on occasion, and leading women's magazines consider that news of

sufficient importance to go to unusual lengths and expense to report it. A campus is also a meeting place for many important state and interstate conferences and conventions dealing with a wide variety of interests.

If it takes happenings out of the ordinary to make news, then they may be found on a campus in abundance, in its student life, in its work and play, in its laboratories, in its convocations, in its extension service, in its experiment stations and research departments.

Often the scientific and technical news that is found on a campus is of highest importance and of wide interest and far-flung consequence. College and university presidents, deans of colleges or divisions, heads of departments, research investigators are often individuals whose fame is nationwide or even worldwide. Their work, their discoveries, their views even, are often out of the ordinary and make news.

An analysis of the news of a campus and its immediate community will make it plain how different types fit into the different classifications of interest discussed in the preceding chapter.

News of life and death is found, of course, in a college or university as well as elsewhere, and often it involves unusual circumstances which give it special value. For example, faculty or research men may contract fatal disease in the course of their work. Laboratory explosions have seriously injured or even killed students and instructors working in them. Epidemics sometimes involve college communities, while college and university hospitals may provide a considerable grist of news.

The news interest that lies in *fight or struggle* is found in football and other athletic events, of course, but it may also be found in that less spectacular but equally interesting struggle of individual students in getting an education against difficulties; for instance, there is the young fellow who covers a dairy route early in the morning, or cares for children in a well-organized way, or holds a run as a Pullman porter. Then there is the struggle that sometimes comes when educational institutions happen to get involved in politics, and a governor takes measures to oust a college head,

as has been done, or displace a faculty member who has displeased some political big gun.

News with *crime* interest that is more than local is not frequent on a campus, but it does happen. Minor crime may not be as common in a university or college community as elsewhere, but it is there in petty thefts, occasional burglaries, prowling, peeping. On one agricultural college campus a student reporter uncovered the fact that the college dairy which sold milk in the community was violating a city ordinance governing the butterfat content of milk sold.

Not many items of college crime happenings are published. Campus newspapers do not often publish a story that reflects upon the good name of the institution or its students. The authorities handle such matters as quietly as possible. Daily newspapers in a college town more often than not refrain from publishing stories of this sort. If it is used, the name of the student involved may not be printed. On the other hand, if the happening is something in the nature of a student prank, done in a spirit of fun, perhaps mistaken fun, but not maliciously, the news is likely to be given large space.

Students in a course in technical journalism may never have to gather and write stories of politics and crime. Yet a student reporter never knows, when he goes to work on a routine story of some technical experiment, say, when he will come across something entirely different. The good reporter will get the facts if possible and report to the instructor, or if working for a publication, to the editor. The instructor or editor must decide whether it is a story to be written and printed, or not.

The gathering and writing of a story of this classification may give the student reporter some valuable experience, even though he is looking forward only to technical writing.

News that deals with *women, children, and the home* may be found on any campus and often is highly interesting news. People generally are more than usually curious about the doings of co-eds. What faculty women do has interest, whether it be in the field of instruction, writing, speaking, or in research. If a young woman

takes a course in animal husbandry or civil engineering or veterinary medicine, she becomes news. The faculty woman who secures a leave of absence to spend a year in exploration in connection with research work is news. Where there is a nursery school on a campus or where home economics students in the home management house adopt a baby, this makes news.

News with the appeal of *adventure and romance* is plentiful on the college campus. There are stories of unusual ways in which students earn their way through school. Students from foreign lands often furnish a news story of entrancing interest. Hobbies of faculty and students often involve adventure. Faculty men often have adventures in connection with their field work or while on vacation. Maybe it is the janitor who has the adventure to tell.

A fascinating type that a student reporter may dig up is one concerning the work or adventures of a graduate of the college. A graduate leaves the campus to grow cotton for the Soviet government in Siberia, to work on a rubber plantation in Liberia, to work on a banana plantation in Central America. Or he may have done engineering work on the Burma Road in China, or prospected for gold in northern Canada, or worked on a bridge-building job in some foreign jungle. Often faculty members can give the facts for a story about such a graduate. A graduate returns to the campus, for a visit or to take graduate work. The good reporter sees a news story in this visitor and gets it. Again, the news story may be secured from a casual visitor to the campus, perhaps for a lecture before some campus group. Many of these are handled best when written as interviews.

The dean of agriculture goes to a sheep ranch and culls 15,000 head of sheep. A professor of economics buys a new station wagon and spends his summer following the trail of migrant farm laborers. An instructor in engineering begins a class in blacksmithing and wrought iron work for women students. Folk songs are gathered in the Kentucky mountains by a teacher of music. An engineer and a soils authority together invent a new way to make bricks. On the campus of the University of Louisiana is an old iron kettle which is a memorial of the man who made Louisiana's sugar industry possible.

Happenings such as these make news for daily newspapers, and they make news and feature articles for other publications, too. They are to be found on every college and university campus by student reporters.

Some campus news tips: In the following paragraphs are listed tips for campus news stories that were turned in by a class in technical journalism, which illustrate further the great variety of news that can be found by looking for it:

Several years ago a woman graduate student in agricultural chemistry secured nationwide publicity when she invented a synthetic cracker that was a perfect food, containing all needed food elements. This cracker never appeared on the market because manufacturers of regular crackers would not take it up. The inventor is now married and does not feed her husband synthetic crackers.

A junior agricultural student who took a truckload of corn to Florida during spring vacation was wrecked in Kentucky mountains while returning with a load of oranges.

Black and white fox terrier attends nutrition class in school of home economics—maybe wants his rations up to home economics standards.

Floriculture Forum appropriates \$100 for improvements and equipment for University greenhouses. Money earned by sale of candy, flowers, and succulent plants at florists' short course and Farmers' Week.

Graduate student in home economics just back from six years as missionary teacher in Japan. Came back on Danish cargo boat.

Student confined to bed with supposed mercury poisoning in foot after working during vacation in treating seed with mercury dust at seed company warehouse.

Student has saved 5,347 pennies for his wedding—as yet an entirely theoretical future event.

Of 100 students who took proficiency examination in English to escape fundamental course, only one passed—a graduate of a high school in Shanghai, China.

Local florists to teach flower design to students in floriculture on campus.

Students earning meals at University hospital by work in linen room ousted to make room for WPA workers.

University 4-H Club to entertain older rural youths from seven surrounding counties with folk dances, games, and a floor show.

Agricultural chemistry class feeds white rats.

Rural electrification is new course in agricultural engineering.

Bird census taken again in University woodlot.

Rural homemakers' chorus groups in thirteen counties have accepted invitation to participate in concert to be given by a state chorus during Farmers' Week.

The state land use planning committee has been enlarged to include four farm women and the state home demonstration leader in extension work.

New polishing equipment, run by electricity, has been installed in the quantitative chemistry laboratories to clean apparatus formerly cleaned by hand.

ASSIGNMENTS

1. List briefly the news and feature articles in an issue of a daily newspaper which have some relationship with some college campus here or elsewhere. Do the same in one issue of a farm paper, trade magazine, or a magazine in some special field.

2. Find out and report—either in a news story or otherwise, as instructor may ask—on one of the following as it applies to your own particular major field or department: Location of graduates from most recent commencement. Faculty changes made since close of previous term. Repairs, improvements, or changes on campus, in buildings, in class or laboratory equipment, in experimental plots, on university farms, and the like. Books, bulletins, or articles written recently by faculty. Where or how faculty spent recent vacation period. Anyone recently injured or seriously ill. Any marriages, deaths, or births. Any recent news of prominent graduates. Honors awarded to faculty members or students recently. Students recently pledged to social organizations or elected to honor or professional societies.

3. Find out and report on what part students and faculty took or will take in some recent event or one to occur this term off the campus, or in an event on the campus which brings off-campus groups to it. A state or regional fair or exposition, National Dairy Show, International Livestock Exposition, American Farm Bureau convention, National Grange convention, rural electrification conference, Vegetable Growers' Association of America convention, state ceramics

association meeting, annual convention of state home economics association, annual extension conference, or farm and home week are examples of these events.

4. Gather facts about one of the following: Trips faculty men expect to make this term. Trips to be made by student groups during term, as tour of coal mines or chemical plants, or visit to a central market, or practice judging by livestock judging team. Conventions to be attended by faculty or students off campus in near future. Major programs being carried on now by some member or division of extension service.

(Note. These assignments indicate some of the easier assignments with which a student reporter may begin his work. These may be expanded as instructor desires. They will, of course, be continued as students go on to cover material discussed in future chapters.)