

HORATIO AND COEDS

By JACKIE WEBSTER

On the campus the winter season was in full swing. In the Arts Building great grotesque posters proclaimed the coming events — a Ski dance — Get your tickets early! Don't forget the Hockey Games — The Sleigh Ride and of course, the Red and Black Revue. And down by the S. R. C. Hut an ingratiating voice insinuated the time of your life could be had at the Old Gaiety for only twenty-five cents.

In the Reading Room wistful post-mortems on Co-Ed Week were still being held, but in the Canteen all topics led to Engineering Week and in spite of gentle hints from various sources, there were those who wondered if The Lord Beaverbrook would ever be quite the same after the night of the Twenty-fifth. Yes, there was a definite air of excitement on the Campus.

And Horatio was excited too! His excitement, however, was not occasioned by Co-Ed Week just gone by or Engineering Week yet to come — Horatio was one to put first things first. There were lectures to be attended, notes to be taken, essays to be written, work to be done and Horatio, who minded his own business for the most part, sometimes wondered how some people managed to accumulate the required forty per cent come Exam time. And essays were particularly troublesome. He was just beginning, "Man, his place in the Cosmos", and he found it required a great deal of thought.

But Horatio's excitement had nothing to do with Man and the Cosmos either. It might be more accurate to say that Horatio was highly perturbed. And not without cause.

Horatio's one vice was a deep and abiding interest in The Brunswickan. Each Monday morning he procured a copy bright and early, and in common with many others, he spent a delightful few minutes during the first lecture slumming with Spicer or digesting Mr. Hay's editorials. Somehow Horatio felt he had his finger on the pulse of the entire University these few minutes Monday morning.

He had taken a polite interest in Mr. Hay's comments regarding the young ladies of the Campus, but that was all. Since his knowledge of Co-eds was limited to what he read in The Brunswickan he was quite willing to accept Mr. Hay's verdict on the intentions and designs of this admirable group of girls. He had few opinions himself; he gave the girls a wide berth and all the respect due any creature that may or may not be dangerous — Horatio had spent no time attempting to find out.

It is small wonder that Horatio was surprised to say the least when a strolling reporter solicited his views on Wimmen for publication in the Brunswickan poll. "Surprised," is not quite the word — Horatio was literally speechless. But Our Reporter was not. He asked question after question and Horatio's replies were confined to a simple "Yes" or "No" while he struggled to control the blush of embarrassment which mounted to the roots of his hair and made him appear to be on fire. He struggled manfully to defeat his embarrassment and then the Reporter was gone. Horatio was disappointed — he hadn't even heard the questions.

On Monday morning Horatio opened The Brunswickan all unsuspecting and there before his very eyes was his name in bold black type and long, endless paragraphs, it seemed, on the Topic of the Day. Just before all the horrifying implications dawned on him he had time to feel a peculiar glow of pride.

"Why, if I said all that," he thought "I must be quite an authority on women". But Horatio was honest with himself. He knew he had not said all these things — that somehow he had been tricked into it and even more bitter was the knowledge that everyone on the Campus would know it too. He almost wept with humiliation. He would be the laughing stock of the Campus, of that there was no doubt. He closed his eyes and the big, black type danced before him. PERHAPS, BUT I KNOW TWO OR THREE AT LEAST WHO ARE INTERESTED IN ANYTHING BUT MARRIAGE. I THINK THE BOYS ARE MISTAKING A LITTLE CASUAL FLIRTATIOUSNESS WITH THE GRAND PASSION. IT HAS BEEN MY EXPERIENCE. IT HAS BEEN MY EXPERIENCE.

These were the words that tortured Horatio although there were many, many more in the article. He wished he could stay in the class-room and never, never venture out.

But the lecture came to an end as lectures always do — eventually — and Horatio slunk down the Hall. He made the safety of the open Campus with no jeering laughter ringing in his ears. He decided he could not go to Class, he must go straight home. It grieved him to cut a class, but this was an emergency. He sped down the Hill and breathed a little easier until he came to the Canteen. Here was an ordeal he dreaded, but perhaps few were around. He must go in because he was completely out of jelly beans. He braced himself and opened the door.

He was so wrong. The Canteen was filled and a few random notes of laughter grated on Horatio's nerves like little files. He closed his eyes and aimed himself at the Counter and just then someone spoke his name. He was about to bolt and run, but there was a note in the voice that held him. He opened his eyes and then he opened them wider. Four girls were at a table and there was a vacant chair and he understood that he was being invited to join them. It was just as well because his knees had begun to buckle. Someone suggested coffee and Horatio kept his wits about him just long enough to order a glass of warm milk and then he abandoned himself to his surroundings.

Gradually, slowly, consciousness returned to Horatio and in a dim way he began to understand something of what had happened. Apparently no one questioned the integrity of the Brunswickan Staff and these girls were willing to concede that a book can't be judged by the cover. True, Horatio had always seemed

a tinge dull, but obviously he had something to say when he wanted to say it. Just the non-committal type apparently. Horatio mentally retracted the remarks he had made about Inquiring Reporters and he smiled. This Reporter was not a bad fellow after all. They shared a secret and the secret was safe. He relaxed and tossed his last jelly bean high in the air and caught it as it came down. The girls chuckled appreciatively.

Much later Horatio emerged from the Canteen. Two lectures later in fact. He took stock of the situation. Several girls had spoken to him in the Canteen and even the Foresters eyed him with a new respect. He was on first name terms with four girls on the Campus, if he could find the nerve to address them so familiarly. One of them had said, "we'll see you later". And he almost convinced himself that he had not merely imagined the invitation in the eyes of the dark haired one. Horatio could fairly see himself in a phone booth dialing 8670 or 3887 for instance, and nonchalantly asking for a date.

Horatio looked at the clock. He should go to the Library, but there was no time. He knew a fellow who had a copy of THE CHINESE ROOM and he knew where he could find him. He turned toward the Brunswickan office. Two lectures missed. "The lectures be damned", Horatio said and kicked a snowball out of his way. He was not being irreverent, he had just begun to realize that even with no knowledge of Man's place in the Cosmos, given a few clues on Woman's place in the Sun, Life can be beautiful.

Horatio sighed happily!

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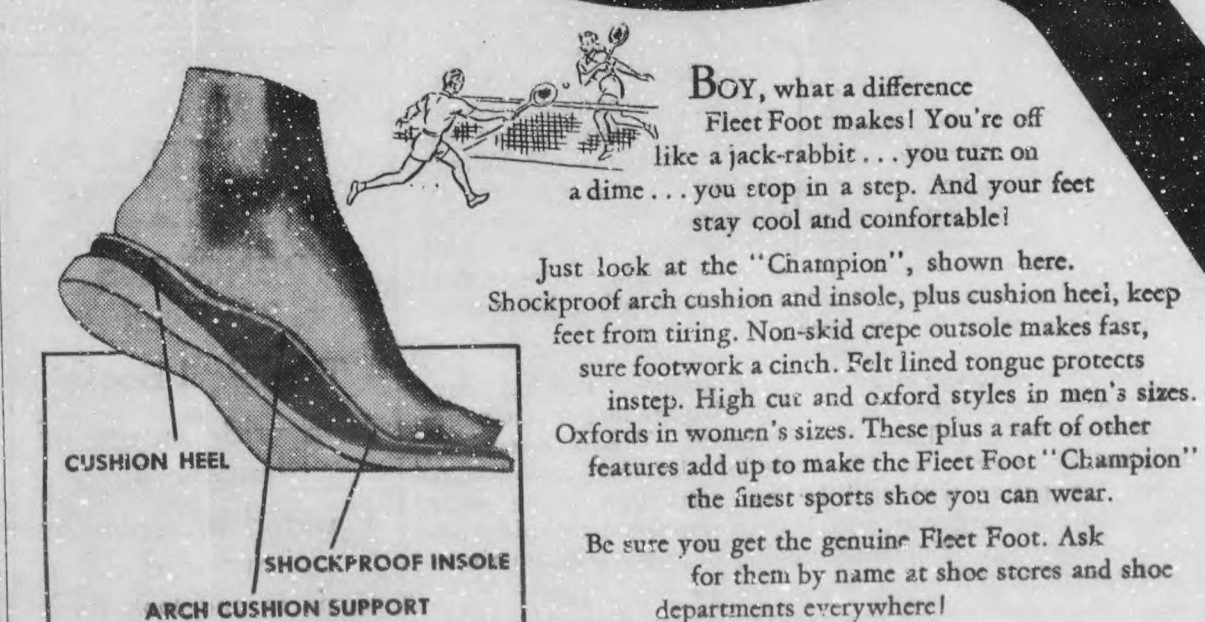
Drop in and
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Isn't this antique furniture gorgeous? I wonder where Mrs. Butts got that huge old chest?"

"They tell me her old lady was the same way."—Gateway.



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