

# CAMPUS LEADERS:



Aaron Levin

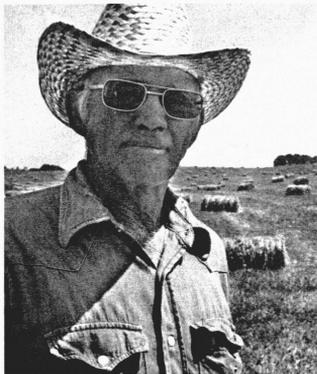
James A. Finch, Jr., (SGA president 1930-31) lives in Jefferson City and is a member of the Supreme Court of Missouri and a former Curator of the University. Although today's students may be better educated when they get to the University, he still contends, "I'm not sure students of my era were too different than at other periods. It was a time of severe economic problems for many people, which created an awareness of the importance of getting an education."

How often have you wondered about the people you knew in your student days at Mizzou? Not only your close friends — the ones you're likely to keep in touch with anyway — but also those others whose names you might have known because they were active on Campus.

Recently, we wrote to 40 living former presidents of the Missouri Students Association (or Student Government Association, as it was known before 1959), asking them what they had done in the years since they were at Mizzou and how they remembered the students of their own generation.

From the replies we received, it seems that being head of the student government at Mizzou is frequently a stepping stone to a legal career. Thirteen of our 23 respondents are lawyers or in law school. One, James Finch, is a member of the Supreme Court of Missouri, while another, John Oliver (president, '35-'36), is chief judge, United States District Court for the Western District of Missouri. Others practice law in cities and towns across the state.

Of his own student years, Judge Oliver re-



Mary Regan

Chester W. (Chet) Hill (SGA president 1940-41) is a link with Missouri's agricultural heritage. After Army service in World War II, Hill moved to a farm in Adair County (near Kirksville, Missouri) and began raising beef cattle. He works hard bringing in the hay crop, because "that's the other half of cattle farming." Students today, he says, are more "interested in having a good time. But I think the majority are good solid kids, who will contribute to our society."

calls: "In spite of the fact that times were tough and World War II was just around the corner, I think most students were optimistic and happy and were not generally concerned that the Republic would fall or that the world would soon go up in flames. Most students liked everyone else and shared a high hope that once we took charge of things, everything would come out all right."

In the thirties, no one could avoid the effects of the Depression. Kirk Jeffrey ('36-'37) who has been a lawyer and banker and now is an investment advisor in California, says that students were mainly interested in seeking out the financial resources for their education and in finding a job after graduation. And James Freedman ('32-'33) remembers students working for as little as 10 or 15 cents an hour to make ends meet. Today, Freedman, a vice president at Unity School of Christianity in Kansas City, writes religious books and poetry. One of his poems was carried to the moon by Astronaut James Irwin.

Another lawyer, Paul Van Osdol, Jr., of Kansas City, ('37-'38) points out: "The deepest concern at that time was whether there would be opportunities for employment after graduation."

When the war on the horizon in Europe and the Far East finally broke for America, these men and others from Mizzou went off to fight, and life on Campus altered sharply. Special military training programs were set up and many male students were away serving in the armed forces. And since at the time, women



Tom Laco (SGA president 1950-51) joined Proctor & Gamble in 1954 and is now a group vice president and on the board of directors. "There was always enough time for parties, stunts and 'jellying.' I'm sure there always will be. Today's youngsters are remarkably mature, and many of them are very dedicated to getting the most out of college. It's remarkable how similar the attitudes of today's students are, considering how much the world has changed in the past 26 years."

were not considered for the post, there was no student government president during the war years.

"From 1938 to 1941," recalls Lyle D. (Duke) Sullivan ('46-'47), now with Lion Oil Company in El Dorado, Arkansas, "Campus life seemed wrapped around education, sports and social events. Upon my return to the University after service in the Marines, a more serious attitude seemed to prevail."

John Dalton ('48-'49), a lawyer, banker and former president of the University's Board of Curators, remembers post-WWII students as "primarily interested in furthering their education. They were generally a very serious and dedicated group, not too concerned with social action."

As in the Depression, finances were a major problem for students, according to Robert Byers ('47-'48). Many ex-soldiers returned to college backed only by the shoestring of the GI Bill. But the veterans' studiousness was light-

# WHERE ARE THEY NOW?



Ben J. Martin (SGA president 1957-58) opened a law office in Phoenix, Arizona, after practicing in Missouri for many years. In addition to his legal work, Martin has been involved recently in the deprogramming of young people who have joined the Moonies and other religious cults. "After 15 years of successful trial practice, I can report that the cult rescue work is the most personally gratifying I've ever been involved in," he says.



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John Leet (MSA president 1967-68) is a quiet man who lives with his wife and two daughters in an attractive house in St. Louis and is faintly surprised to learn that he is remembered by some at the University as a radical. "I've always been conservative," he says, "but I'm also conservative on people's rights. Many thought we would be the generation to change everything. I never thought so, but it's too early to tell." Currently, Leet operates his own metal recycling business.



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Dan Viets (MSA president 1972-73) defied convention by attending Board of Curators' meetings barefoot. An honest activist then, he continued his involvement in public affairs after leaving the University. Besides running a poster shop in Columbia called Aardvarx, Viets has served on six city commissions since 1973, including a term as chairman of the Columbia Human Rights Commission. He ran for mayor last April and lost, but gained 42 percent of the vote.

ened by social events like the appearance of Stan Kenton's contemporary jazz band. Today, Byers is in engineering sales and management with the Bailey Meter Company in Tucker, Georgia.

Except for the period of the Korean War, the fifties seem to have been a time of relative calm, with no great social concerns, says Sikeson attorney Fielding Potashnick ('54-'55) — "mainly getting good grades and then getting a job."

Donald Wolff, now a lawyer in Clayton, says that the biggest issue on Campus was the abolition of negative hours. During Wolff's tenure ('58-'59) the SGA metamorphosed into the Missouri Students Association.

Even in the early sixties, recalls Lawrence Fisher ('62-'63), his fellow students were mainly concerned with "football, TGIFing, extending the hours when girls had to be in, the closing of Andy's and the Stables and M-Store parking tickets."

But the same decade brought the wrenching changes on Campus and in our culture as a whole that have formed the present University community. By the end of the sixties, any placidity would be gone. Now vice president of member relations for Midcontinent Farmers Association, Dave Thomas ('68-'69) remembers: "On one hand, a very active and vocal minority had the limelight in the media. On the other, there was still a lot of student apathy." James Heeter was MSA president in the turbulent, difficult year of 1969-70, then went on to Harvard Law School. Today, he practices in Kansas City. Of his time at the University, he can say, "Students were, of course, most occupied with issues involving the war in Vietnam. In one way

or another, the war seemed to touch countless aspects of our lives and either created or highlighted dozens of other issues — like racism and sexism."

Heeter thinks that however students chose to express their political and social concerns, the talent and energy they expended on these causes permanently made its mark on the University and society.

Not only the war, but also the increasing awareness of the drug culture, marked Dennis Viehland's term ('74-'75). Even so, by the time Viehland graduated, he could detect the movement toward more student concern with their personal lives, particularly their careers. Viehland, now living in Colorado, has been a research analyst in higher education.

And what about more recent years? Carrie Francke was the first woman elected to head MSA ('75-'76) and now is serving as press secretary in Senator John Danforth's Washington office.

She contends: "Students today are not apathetic — they do care. It's just that their concerns are more parochial than they were during the sixties. I think most students are concerned about getting a decent job when they finish school and about enjoying the occupation they choose for themselves."

If so, it may be that students of today have a lot more in common with their predecessors of

the last five decades than they realize. Certainly this group of former student leaders speaks well of the current generation of students.

Summing up the single message of many replies, James Bone ('52-'53), business manager of the space shuttle program with NASA, says, "I'm optimistic and encouraged by the students with whom I come in contact."

And law student Chip Casteel ('71-'72) notes that as the tensions of the late sixties and early seventies dissipated, the University's decision-making system has become far more open than even five years ago.

Surely the world and the University have changed a lot in the last 50 years. But despite these changes, student leaders of each generation carried a common concern and commitment out of their years at Mizou into a world in which they remain active contributors. — Aaron Levin.