

25. X. 58.

Dear Ken--

Thanks for your letter of the 6th inst. Your first reactions to life at Columbia and to the Village proved most interesting reading. Since it wasn't personal I knew you wouldn't mind my showing your letter to John King, who turned up at Judy Levy's birthday party wch I think was the Wednesday of the week your letter arrived.

Where shall I begin? I hope some of what follows dosen't compound what I touched on in our telephone conversation before you left.

Shmuel Barowsky & Simon Kestenbaum arrived here the week after you left, and have resumed their places in the cafeteria coterie. Other new faces include Günther Döcker and Erich Musyl, both exchange German students in the Law School. In the History department we have two graduate students representing the Commonwealth: one, Lionel Fredman, a one-man chanber of commerce for Australia with an astounding bibliographical background plus a law degree and a M.A. gained in twelve months at Stanford and an avid cricket enthusiast, is a thoroughly likeable chap; the other, Michael Sissons, an Oxford scholar working toward his Ph.D. in southern history, is somewhat stiff, reserved, and mumbles his words so that it is not always easy to understand what he's saying. In this week's Hullabaloo the latter wrote a rather facile (Fredman thought inane) article of the type foreign students contribute at times. If I can, I'll try to scrape up a few back issues of the paper and mail them to you. The format has changed, resembling the T-P but with the Tulane coat-of-arms at the top giving the paper a rather tabloid London Times appearance.

I met Michael Sissons at a party Cynthia Fredericks gave at the beginning of the semester. He arrived with Charles Davis--you remember he's the former Rhodes Scholar, medievalist of the history department. Towards the end of the party as we--Tommy Blouin, Ronny Soderberg, Tommy Woods, Bussy, Shmuel, Charles Davis and myself--sat in Cynthia's den drinking coffee she had just brewed, the topic of conversation somehow rambled around to Ireland. Cynthia began to extole with some nostalgia the Ireland of Yeats etc. At once Sissons challenged her sentimental picture of Ireland and proceeded to criticize the political naïveté of Michael Collins, de Valera, and other Irish revolutionist and insisted that the U.S. with its Irish population was disposed, he felt, to view the nationalist movement uncritically etc. Cynthia, it proved, was not even aware of these political figures, which revelation of ignorance, awakened Sissons's condescending surprise. The latter suggested that if she informed herself of these scoundrels, her maudlin picture of Hibernia would become more favorably balanced etc. What made all this so amusing was the fact that the two contestants were really talking about completely different things. In any event we've decided Sissons is somewhat of a bore.

Sissons is sharing a flat with Charles Davis. This fact elicited a delightful observation from Joe Lyde one afternoon in the cafeteria. Simon, Joe & I were sitting at a table a short distance away from Hogan, the head of the history department, and some other history graduate students. What drew our attention to them was Simon's sudden paranoid remark that they were looking over towards us and laughing--obviously, Simon thought, at his beard. At this Lyde proceeded to besmirch Hogan with many unholy oaths, which performance he had no sooner completed than Hogan & Sissons were upon us. Hogan, unaware of what had just passed, introduced himself to Lyde and in turn to Sissons as a fellow Briton and jazz aficionado. With this done Hogan departed and Lyde and Sissons began to exchange notes about England, The Observer, Sissons's tour of duty in Germany, the possibilities of forming a soccer team, the false, reverent intellectual regard for jazz in England, the presumption of Cleveland Amory in setting himself up as a jazz expert, and the housing condition in N.O. After strongly recommending the economic advantages of living in the Quarter, Lyde asked where Sissons was staying. In answer Sissons mumbled that he was sharing a flat with Charles Davis. To this Lyde rejoined, "Oh, trying to recapture your Oxford days?" Whether any double entendre was intended by his crack is not certain, tho' given Lyde's reputation for insults the possibility is not unlikely. In any event Sissons either decided to accept the remark as rhetorical or overheard it and the conversation proceeded to other fields.

In my babblings I almost overlooked mentioning the presence of the female Britisher doing graduate work in sociology. Lionel Fredman brought her over to our table a week ago Saturday. She's from Yorkshire and has a typically English name: Valerie Woodger. Though you might not suspect it, what with all I've written about Sissons, I'm on much friendlier terms with Fredman than Sissons. Indeed, I've only spoken with Sissons about three times whereas I take lunch with Lionel almost every day--he has Sam Williamson's old carrell. The first day we had lunch together he explained the game of cricket to me, after I'd displayed obvious ignorance of the sport.

I don't know whether you read the T-P in N.Y. or whether the story got into any of the papers up there, but three Tulane students killed a Mexican guide, who was directing a group of Mexican doctors and their wives on a weekend tour of the city. The students claim (this happened at night in the Quarter) he solicited them and one of them knocked him down for his trouble. The guide didn't get up so the students left. Later the same night one of the students, feeling remorse, reported the event to the campus authorities, who recommended that they surrender themselves to the police. They've been arraigned, but have not come up for trial yet. Then a week after this--and what has just preceded was only offered by way of setting the scene for the following--Shmuel, on his way to some friend's house in the quarter, was bludgeoned on the skull three times with a lead pipe and robbed by three spick types from Texas.

As Shmuel tells it: he began screaming at the top of his lungs causing a resident to open her window and in turn cry out. This frightened the three foot-pads off taking what they thought to be Shmuel's wallet--they erred in the confusion, however, and took his address book instead. The malfactors had no sooner withdrawn than a patrol car turned the corner. The police helped Shmuel into the car and were off to Charity. But as the car turned the next corner, Shmuel recognized the three and the car pulled up next to them. At this they broke into a run, while one of the three pulled the blood-stained pipe from under his shirt and cast it into the gutter. The three were caught, other patrol cars along with one black maria quickly converged on the spot, and policemen began not too gently to push the disturbers-of-the-peace into the black maria. In the confusion one of the policemen grabbed Shmuel, who was standing dazedly beside the patrol car with blood pouring down over his shoulders, and began to propel him towards the black maria. Fortunately for Shmuel the officer, who had picked him up, was distracted long enough to shout "That's the victim", and he was immediately unhanded. After a few days in Turo, Shmuel is again back in school wearing his beret everywhere to cover his seventeen-stiched and plastered scalp.

You'll have to admit the first few weeks have not been without some vicarious excitement.

What else can I report? Oh yes, on the 3rd inst. Prof. Gerhart Ritter, Germany's foremost historian, gave a lecture in Dixon Hall on the role of the German army in politics from 1900 to 1945. In some ways the evening was not unlike the one last semester when Toynbee spoke, tho' the house was hardly so crowded. Pres. Harris & spouse, Dean Lumiansky, other faculty members and students, plus the German consular corps were there. The lecture itself was appalling. This description is in no way intended to reflect on the content of the address, but rather the complete absence of spontaneity in his delivery. As I think back over the evening I'm not sure one could fairly say that it was a speech. In the first place it was read from a type-written script that might have been the last draft fro a scholarly article, and in reading it he gave the impression that he really didn't understand a word he was mouthing, but had only learned in a very rudimentary way how to pronounce written English. The experience reminded me of the lampoons of tutonic types Sid Caesar is so famous for. The chief difference in this comparison being that you can at least understand Caesar. One student reported he saw Lumiansky dozing--the rendition lasted somewhat over an hour. Dr. James admitted afterwards at a reception at the alumni house that he had not been conscious throughout the entire preformance.

The following evening there was a Rilke-Symposium in Newcomb Chapel. Except for two speakers the affaire was given in German. Madame Lang, of the French department, was one of the four who spoke in German. I wont bore you with any other details of this not

especially noteworthy evening. As you can see, this week might have been designated German Kultur week.

Before I close this lengthening epistle, I would like to request a favor of you. I have unsuccessfully tried to purchase some calligrapher's ink everywhere in town. Since I've heard that anything can be obtained in New York, I would appreciate your making some inquiries for me. I thought it might be available in the Columbia book store or perhaps at some esoteric stationery shop. The names of the two brands that have come to my attention are Swan's and Pelikan. I should, perhaps, warn you that when I've made such inquiries the clerks have tried to sell me waterproof India ink, which is unsatisfactory for fountain pen use. The colors I'm interested in are either black or brown or both. If you are successful in locating some, either advise me of the price and I will mail you the necessary sum, or mail me the name and address of the store. I'm in no hurry, and if you feel this will prove an inconvenient or burdensome chore, please feel free to ignore the foregoing.

Again thanks for your letter, and drop me a few lines whenever you aren't too pressed.

With warmest regards,

*Dave Prescott*