Chapter 9

PRESIDENT McCLURE'S EARLIER YEARS (1936 - 45)

Upon President Omwake's resignation in November 1935 the Board immediately appointed a committee to find a successor. Various candidates were considered, both those suggested by friends of the College and those who presented themselves, and serious consideration was given to the possibility of a non-alumnus president. The conclusion of this process was the nomination and election on June 6, 1936 of Dr. Norman Egbert McClure '15 as seventh president of Ursinus. His career after graduation and his return to the College as professor of English in 1928 have already been recorded.

Although President McClure had had ten years of administrative experience as Registrar of Pennsylvania Military College and had clear ideas on how to solve the problems confronting Ursinus, he was primarily a scholar and teacher. He wanted a person with extensive financial and business experience closely associated with him, "to assume charge of the physical plant, to supervise the purchasing of supplies, and especially to aid in the marketing of Annuity Bonds, and to aid in raising money for the Omwake Scholarship Fund" which had just been authorized as a tribute to the retiring president. To this position he nominated and the Board elected Donald Lawrence Helfferich '21.

Mr. Helfferich, whose grandfather had been one of the original movers in the creation of Ursinus and whose parents were both alumni, had been graduated from Yale Law School in 1924 and since that time associated in the management of Gimbel Brothers as assistant store manager and head of the legal staff in Philadelphia. In 1936 he was elected executive vice-president of the Upper Darby National Bank. Mr. Helfferich had the advantage of an intimate acquaintance with the College's affairs, for he had been an active member of the Board since his election to it in 1927, the youngest person ever to be elected to it and now its senior member.

The relationship of the new president and vice-president was to last even longer than that of President Bomberger and Vice-president Super from 1870 to
Dr. Norman Egbert McClure, professor of English from 1928, was elected seventh president in 1936. He was committed to liberal education and academic excellence as the path to improving the College's position.

President McClure was inaugurated on June 5, 1937. In his inaugural address, after paying tribute to Presidents Bomberger, Spangler, and Omwake, he stressed the tradition in which Ursinus had been founded and on which it built, an institution where “the youth of the land may be liberally educated under the benign influence of Christianity.” In his own words “Ursinus must remain essentially a college of the liberal arts. Ursinus must remain a Christian college.” Its chief function is to “aid the boy and the girl of exceptional promise to become a superior kind of man, a superior kind of woman.” Its training must enhance intelligence, honesty, and devotion to a larger good than self-interest:

The college must help the student to discipline his mind, to free it from pettiness and prejudice; must teach him not only how to think, but also to appreciate the best that man in the past has thought and done and longed to do; must require of him that faithfulness in the performance of his work, that integrity and honesty, which mark the good citizen; must teach him that his ability and his education carry with them, not rights and privileges, but duties and obligations and burdens that others will not and cannot assume; must teach him to work unselfishly for those who are less fortunate than he is; must teach him, in a con-
fused world, to avoid false standards, to turn from the idols of the marketplace, to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with his God. This, as we conceive it, is the duty of the liberal arts college toward the student.

As a converse to this ideal President McClure warned against the danger inherent when a college attempts to cater to temporary or imagined needs of the community, when it lowers its standards of admission or achievement, when it seeks prestige by athletic prowess or any means other than the quality of its graduates and their service to their country and world.

This was the long-range aim of the College and the new administration. The immediate problems of Ursinus and the solutions proposed for them were the subject of President McClure's first annual report written seven months earlier, after five months in office. As he said, the educational problems were less serious than the economic problems, of which he named three as most pressing: "the necessity of increasing our income from endowment, the necessity of lightening the burden of our debt, and the necessity of providing living accommodations for a student body of at least 550." In fact, the problems were interlocking:

Even with the strictest economy in all departments of the College, with the gradual curtailment of "emergency" scholarships, with the more severe credit policy adopted last summer, with the gradual increase of endowment, and with the gradual reduction of the debt, the College cannot for the next few years operate economically unless the student body numbers 550.

One solution would have been to lower admission standards and take students who were poorly prepared but who could pay all the costs of their education. To do so would have meant a reversal of the steady raising of admission standards throughout the past decade. This the President rejected in conformity with his policy of always keeping paramount the long-term consequences for the College of any action.

Among the three most pressing needs the President cited was the need for more endowment. Paradoxically, even the little that Ursinus had was materially threatened early in the new administration. When Robert Patterson bequeathed a trust fund of $150,000 to Ursinus in 1894, his will provided that "in event of the failure of the officers and faculty of the College to truly and faithfully teach, maintain and carry out Evangelical Reformed principles," the trust was to be divided among his and Mrs. Patterson's heirs.

Early in 1937 a number of the heirs brought suit in the Orphans Court of Philadelphia, alleging that the stipulations of the bequest were not being carried out and requesting that the fund should be distributed to them. Just why they chose to bring suit at this time is obscure, for, as was brought out in the testimony before both the Orphans Court and the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, the principles and practices of the College had not changed through the years in a way to invalidate the bequest. Possibly the heirs thought that the election of President
McClure, who was an Episcopalian, was a deviation from "Evangelical Reformed principles." On whatever ground their hopes were based, the suit was a serious threat to the College, for the Patterson Fund was the largest single part of the modest endowment.

In actuality the suit proved to be more an expensive annoyance than a real threat. The appellants were unable to demonstrate to the court that they knew what "Evangelical Reformed principles" were or to show that the College had materially changed position or practice. For example, compulsory daily chapel followed the pattern described by President Bomberger in his description of the college day in 1872. Ursinus was fortunate in having as its counsel William A. Schnader, Esq., an alumnus of Franklin and Marshall College, a prominent layman in the erstwhile Reformed Church in the United States, and a former attorney-general of the Commonwealth. Two key witnesses for the College were Dr. James W. Meminger '84, a prominent minister in the denomination and a long-time member (1896–1939) of the Board of Directors, and Dr. George W. Richards, Hon. '20, president of the Theological Seminary in Lancaster and at that time probably the greatest living authority on the history and theology of the Church. The case, heard first before Judge Charles Klein of the Orphans Court, was dismissed with the comment that the contentions of the heirs were "loose and trifling."

They then appealed to the Orphans Court en banc, with the same result, and subsequently to the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, which rejected the suit. Chief Justice John Kephart found "ample testimony to show that the institution is carried on today much the same as then, [when Mr. Patterson made his will]." Justice Kephart declared that Appellants' evidence does not disclose that the College is not teaching, maintaining and carrying out Evangelical Reformed principles, and the burden was on them. Their witnesses were not acquainted with the true meaning of these principles. Certainly, their testimony was not of such weight as to destroy the charitable trust and sustain the contention that this seat of learning has abandoned the religious principles to which it had subscribed for many years. . . . The evidence offered by the appellee in both quantity and quality was clearly sufficient to sustain the findings that the College was still carrying out the testator's intentions.

The suit which terminated thus favorably for Ursinus was watched with great interest by other colleges, some of which had similar trust funds that they might have lost had the courts established an adverse precedent in the Patterson case.

Increase in the general endowment and in the income from it came slowly in the years before World War II. The total, including endowed scholarships and prizes, was $370,000 in 1936. Five years later, in 1941, it was $631,000, an average increase of $12,000 per year. Fortunately, improvement in other parts of the College's financial structure was more rapid and was to accelerate during the war.

The increase in the enrollment to 550, which President McClure had predicated as one of the essentials for efficient operation, came quickly. During the years from
1927 to 1935, first because of the lack of dormitory space and second because of the depression, the enrollment, with slight annual variations, had remained at an average of 463. In 1936 it topped 500 (the exact figure was 505) for the first time, in 1937 it reached 525, and in 1938 the desired figure of “at least 550” was achieved with an enrollment of 554. No watering down of standards brought this increase. On the contrary, each successive entering class scored higher on the tests of the American Council of Education than its predecessor. In 1936 the class was twenty-eighth among the over 300 institutions using the tests, and in 1937 it was thirteenth.

So far so good. But increased enrollment, while it brought income from tuition to balance the educational budget, brought at the same time a need for dormitory space. The project of building a women’s dormitory group which President Omwake had initiated years before and which President McClure, certain members of the Board, and the Ursinus Women’s Club were actively favoring, just could not be ventured upon at this time. Plans had been drawn for a group of seven connecting units, each housing about thirty students and costing $20,000 to $30,000. But the College had in hand for this project not much over $20,000, and while it was planned to build only three units at the outset, there was no borrowing power available.

The only solution possible was the one found in the previous administration, to buy or rent houses in the town and to squeeze people in. In the fall of 1937 fifteen rooms in the men’s dormitories designed for two men were occupied by three each. In 1936, Clamer Hall was leased for use as a girl’s dormitory and continued to be until it was given to the College in 1933 by Dr. Guilliam H. Clamer. The first purchase was the A. D. Fetterolf property (612 Main Street) in September of 1936. Funds for this purchase were contributed by the Ursinus Women’s Club in the following June, and by the decision of the Club the house was in 1947 named Duryea Hall, in honor of Rhea Duryea Johnson ’08, the first woman member of the Board. In September 1937 the A. T. Allebach house (944 Main Street) was rented as a dormitory for girls. The Board had decided in 1936 to sell Highland Hall because of its distance from the campus and the excessive cost of upkeep, but deferred action since its rooms were needed. The pressure was at its highest in 1940 when enrollment reached 582, the pre-war peak. Through additional contributions to the project and the prospect of the Beardwood bequest being received, the possibility of beginning construction on the women’s dormitories seemed bright, but war conditions and rising prices frustrated that hope. And decreased enrollments during the war years lessened the immediate need.

Rising prices did not embrace the cost of education for the student. In the decade of 1930 to 1940 there was only one increase, in 1932, of $30 in the inclusive fee. For students living in college the total charge was $675, which was increased by an extra fee for rooms in certain dormitories. The Board was reluctant to raise charges for several reasons. One was competition; there was a certain amount of shopping around by students and parents, especially in the depression years. Another was the desire to keep costs low so that students from low income families, including those of the clergy, would not be excluded. Perhaps a third was the stark
fact that some families couldn’t pay even these modest sums. During the early thirties unpaid accounts and notes amounted to a formidable figure. In June, 1936 the open accounts for the year just completed totalled $16,353. Total student indebtedness, including unsatisfied accounts and notes from previous years, amounted to $56,768. One of the first steps of the new administration was to reduce this drain on current income and to institute a more stringent system. The result was that five years later the corresponding totals were $3,012 and $25,527.

Thus one leak in the dike was gradually closed. The biggest hole through which funds poured out rather than in was the combined debt and debt service charges. In the budget for 1936–7 interest charges amounted to $46,936, over 13%, in a total budget of slightly over $300,000. Immediately upon taking charge the new administration launched a two-pronged attack on the problem by initiating the George Leslie Omwake Scholarship Fund to increase endowment on the one hand and the sale of Series A Annuity Bonds in the amount of $250,000 to retire part of the funded debt on the other. Conditions were still not favorable, and the Treasurer’s reports for the next four years reveal discreetly that both schemes were not prospering. Far more successful were the steps taken in 1941 and 1942. In 1941 an issue of $200,000 4% gold notes was authorized, to retire the 6% gold notes issued in 1932 (the authorized amount in 1932 had been $475,000, but only a little over $200,000 was sold before sale was discontinued). A year later the College placed a first mortgage of $400,000 at 4% with the Norristown-Penn Trust Company, and with the proceeds redeemed the First Mortgage at 5 1/2% placed in 1928. The result was a saving of $10,000 in annual interest charges plus other benefits that need not be recorded here. Provision for repaying at least $15,000 of the mortgage annually was provided for.

Within six years, then, great steps were taken to relieve the College of a huge weight of debt that, like the old man of the sea on Sinbad’s back, had encumbered Ursinus and hindered its progress. Freedom from debt there would probably never be, for progress must be financed, but hopefully the difficult old days of doing too much with too little were ended.

Money, or the lack of it, has bulked large in this history, perhaps in some readers’ eyes occupying an excessively prominent place. Its importance in education can be misunderstood. To be sure, the indispensable elements in education are men and minds, but no legendary picture of Mark Hopkins on one end of his traditional log can really obscure the fact that money, which Cicero said is the sinews of war and Farquhar said is the sinews of love, is to a high degree the sinews of education. Faculty salaries, buildings and equipment, libraries, laboratories, gymnasiums, playing fields, scholarships, maintenance—all take money. It is a means to an end, only a means, but well nigh indispensable.

Among other possible sources of support for the College’s work, President McClure sought the aid of the Evangelical and Reformed Church. Ursinus had a larger proportion of students who were members of the denomination than some of her sister colleges which were actually controlled by it and, as the President
pointed out, was rendering a valuable service in providing college education not only for members who planned to enter the ministry but also for many more members with other careers of value to society in view. In June, 1942, together with President Theodore Distler of Franklin and Marshall College and President Henry Stahr of Hood College, he requested that General Synod make a grant to each of the three colleges. The result was an appropriation of $1,500 to each in the next biennium. Then with several other colleges and academies of the Church, Ursinus engaged in an appeal for support from the thirteen synods east of Ohio, an “Educational Emergency Campaign”. The quota set for Ursinus was $28,000. The amount actually received was $22,000, which was offset by the decision of General Synod in 1944 to increase its annual appropriation to $10,000 for the next three years. In 1947 the appropriation was increased to $15,000. At Ursinus this money was used in scholarships for students who were members of the Church.

The most obvious source of gifts for any college is its alumni. Ursinus had always received gifts, usually in modest amounts, from alumni, but the bequests and the gifts were made on a kind of ad hoc basis, except for such plans as the Maintainers League started by President Omwake in 1914, which died after a couple of years. Systematic annual giving began with the creation of the Loyalty Fund in 1940. The amount contributed during each of the first years was small, but the number of alumni donors in whom the habit of annual giving was formed grew steadily. In 1942–3 the Loyalty Fund totalled $11,919 from 368 donors. This source of support increased rapidly, and some years later the percentage of alumni contributors reached record proportions.

In anticipation of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the opening of the College a special Anniversary Fund was begun in 1943. The goal set was $150,000. By November of 1944 $46,000 had been given and $31,000 in pledges remained to be paid. A year later the fund had increased to $142,000, and two years later the goal was reached and passed. The Fund was raised to help reduce the funded debt, to enlarge the women’s dormitory building fund, and to increase the George Leslie Omwake Scholarship Fund.

The result of all these factors, the aid from the Church, the Loyalty Fund, the Anniversary Fund, and the Navy contract (which will be treated later), was that the financial condition of the College improved greatly during the war years. The Treasurer reported in November, 1944, that the College was able to pay all current operating expenses as they fell due, meet the annual amortization payment on the mortgage, reduce short-term borrowing by ten percent, acquire, alter and equip Hobson Hall, and make needed repairs and improvements. The growth in endowment and scholarship funds was slow (from $673,000 in 1941 to $731,000 in 1945), but the overall financial condition was vastly improved.

Before leaving the administrative and financial area for the academic, one other action should be noted. Upon assuming office President McClure determined that the faculty salaries, which had been cut by a voluntary reduction in 1932, should be restored. Half of the cut was restored in 1936–7 and the other half the following
year. Also a beginning was made on the creation of a faculty retirement plan, which was modified in later years as conditions improved.

Academically, the years from 1936 to 1945 saw few changes, and none of a sweeping nature. In his first report after a full year in office President McClure wrote: “I do not wish to recommend any extension in the scope of our work or any radical change in our methods.” He was referring to whole new programs rather than the continuing revisions and additions within departments, having in mind the uneasy state of the nation and the world, for he qualified this statement by saying “For the immediate future at least, we should attempt to perform our best possible service to society within the definite limits already established. . .”

The group system persisted, although with the gradual expansion of faculty and offerings within departments it became increasingly anachronistic and artificial. For example, it was now possible to take a full major in chemistry or biology, yet the two remained linked because of the system rather than because of an inherent linkage as in the study of bio-chemistry. Similarly, although the Modern Languages Group continued, students tended to concentrate in one foreign language rather than study two or three in equal depth. But not until after the war was the group system finally swept away.

In 1938 comprehensive examinations were first administered to the senior class under the program approved in 1934. In each group a battery of examinations was given during the period of finals. Seniors were exempt from course examinations in their “major” for the first semester so as to lessen the number of ordeals they had to face. In English, for example, the comprehensives were comprised of four separate examinations.

The examinations varied in thoroughness and severity from department to department, and there was a similar variation in the grading. As has been stated, not all departments wanted the system in the first place, some were not ready for it, and not a few hesitated to flunk a senior who had passed all his separate courses for four years and thus snatch his diploma from him at the last moment, for if he failed he had to wait a year to retake examinations. Whether comprehensives would have achieved the hopes which prompted their adoption cannot be known, for in May, 1942 the Faculty voted to omit them “during the period of the war emergency” and after the war in the pressure of the G.I. rush their revival was not thought of. The reason for suspension of the program was that acceleration and the interruption of students’ work by Selective Service made the system impossible to administer efficiently or fairly.

A major reason for the comparatively unchanging education program was the increasing uncertainty of international affairs. Contrary to the period of World War I when the cataclysmic struggle in Europe seemed not to affect thought and life at Ursinus until shortly before America’s entrance into the war in 1917, a sense of the gravity of the international situation showed itself as early as 1938 in the increasing number of addresses to the student body, discussion in clubs such as the International Relations Club, and editorials in the Weekly on the events and trends of the
times, and in an increasing and unprompted concern with current history. In 1939–40 three of the new students were from Austria and Germany, exiled by the war. By this time Selective Service was in operation, and seventy of the 322 male students were registered in it. That all of the rest would soon be called upon to register was plain.

In the years before Pearl Harbor the day-to-day life of the College seemed to change little. A few male students left to enlist; however, their loss was more than made up for by slowly enlarging freshman classes, and not until the fall of 1941 did the trend change. The enrollment that fall was 331, an 8.7% decrease. However, there was no cause for great alarm. Although, as President McClure observed in his report to the Board, the effects of Selective Service in the years immediately ahead could not be predicted, it seemed, before December 7, that male students who had completed one year of work and were in good standing would be deferred.

After Pearl Harbor the situation changed, and the Board and faculty took immediate steps to meet it. Comprehensive examinations were eliminated, vacations were shortened, and an accelerated program instituted so that men could proceed as far and as fast as possible in their course before being drafted. Summer school, which had been discontinued in 1925, was reactivated in a twelve week session with classes meeting six days a week so that the work of a full semester could be completed. New students were admitted in June, September, and February. The College was affiliated with the V-1, V-5, and V-7 programs of the United States Navy, which provided for a period of college training prior to naval training leading to commissions. It was also ready to modify courses to meet requirements of the several branches of the armed services, but this turned out to be unnecessary. Also a program was worked out by which students could carry on their studies and contribute to the war effort by working at the Jacobs Aircraft Engine Company in Pottstown and Superior Tube Company in Collegeville. Spring sports schedules for men were cancelled and a compulsory physical fitness program for all male students was instituted under the direction of Russell C. Johnson '16, Director of Athletics. Because of transportation difficulties a four game football schedule (instead of the usual eight or nine) was played in 1942.

The enrollment in the fall of 1942 was 535 (275 men and 260 women); the entering class of 214 was the largest in Ursinus history. But by spring nearly one hundred men in the Enlisted Reserves had been called to active duty (thirty-two left in a body for Fort Meade on February 18), leaving only reservists who were pre-medical students, mathematics and science majors, and the men in the V-1 and V-7.

On July 6, 1943 the summer term began with 201 men in whites on campus, members of the V-12 unit instituted by the Navy at Ursinus. Under the command of Lieut. George D. Miner, USNR, formerly a public school administrator in California, the unit had two programs, one of two terms for men who would become officers in various branches of the Navy and one of five terms for pre-professional students, mostly preparing for medicine or dentistry (there were a few pre-ministerial students). Most of the men in the unit were transfers from other colleges, men

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graduated from high school in June, or men assigned from active service to the unit. A few were Ursinus students. Except for courses in naval history, engineering drawing, and other subjects appropriate to the training of naval officers whatever their future assignments might be, the men in the second program followed the same curricula they would have followed in peacetime in preparing for their careers.

The men in the V-12 unit were in uniform and under regular naval regimen. Inspections and reviews were held daily. They were housed in Brodbeck and the old dormitory group (and after March, 1944 in Curtis) until late in 1944 when, as the unit began to diminish, Freeland, Derr and Stine were converted to house women students. Civilians on campus became used to hearing floors in dorms referred to as "decks" and stairways as "companionways". The schedules the sea-men followed were rigorous; reveille was at 6:15 A.M. and calisthenics on Price Field at 6:30 preceded chow and a full day of class and laboratory. Despite this they were able to participate in intercollegiate athletics and to socialize with the coeds, who found them attractive both in winter blues and summer whites. Incidentally, because they were assigned to Ursinus from all parts of the country, the College had a far more national student body than at any time in its past, or indeed than it had since.

Along with the constant reminder of the war in the physical presence of the V-12 men and the daily reports in newspapers and the air media, restrictions on food consumption applied to the civilian students (they had to turn over their food ration books to the College). Bomberger, Pfahler, and the Library were closed at night to conserve heat and light. Social events away from campus were somewhat curtailed because of gas rationing. Concern for the war effort expressed itself in War Bond drives, in bandage rolling groups, and in after-class work in factories.

Because a higher percentage of students were resident than in peace time and Sprankle Hall, which had housed women students, was made the Navy sick bay, additional housing for women had to be found. The Wanner property (476 Main Street) was leased, and Mr. and Mrs. Edward S. Fretz sold their property at Sixth Avenue and Main Street to the College (Mr. Fretz had just retired as treasurer after serving for sixteen years. Mrs. Fretz was the former Mabel Hobson '06). The house was named Hobson House in memory of her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Freeland G. Hobson. Mr. Hobson, like his father before him, had been treasurer of the College, from 1899 to 1906.

The V-12 unit was at Ursinus for seven semesters, from July 1, 1943 until October 30, 1945, when it was deactivated. The semesters were the regular length of sixteen weeks, so that college was in session forty-eight weeks of the year. There were no vacations except the week between the closing of one semester and the opening of the next, and a week at Christmas. Commencements were held twice a year, when degrees were conferred on the civilians who had completed their requirements and certificates were awarded to the men in the V-12 unit who were being assigned to further training at another institution or to a naval training base.
or to active duty. Some of them received their bachelor’s degree, and some others completed their college course after the war ended.

Ursinus was most fortunate in having the V-12 unit during the war years. The Navy, unlike some other branches of the armed services, had a sound conception of what colleges are for and how they operate. The autonomy of the faculty was preserved, academic freedom was unimpaired, and the relations between the officers and men of the unit and the civilian side of the College were completely cooperative and cordial. With a few inevitable exceptions the men in the unit were capable, hard workers. If they did occasionally get drowsy in an eleven o’clock class, they could hardly be blamed, for their routine was strenuous. And because the Navy paid the full costs of instruction, housing and maintenance for them, the financial advantages to Ursinus were, as Treasurer Wismer stated, “almost immeasurable.”

This account has carried us past some events and noteworthy aspects of the College and its life in these nine years. The two most important public events were the naming of the Science Building in 1942 and the celebration of the seventy-fifth year in 1945.

From the time of its erection and occupancy in 1932 the Science Building had been called simply that. Some people thought it would be named Anders Hall in honor of Dr. James M. Anders, a long-time member of the Board who was very prominent in the planning of the structure. But no action was taken either before Dr. Anders’ death in 1936 or after. In 1935 the Board elected to membership as his successor, his friend, Dr. George E. Pfahler, a physician of world-wide renown as a pioneer in the use of radium and X-rays in medicine. Dr. Pfahler at once assumed a lasting and generous interest in the Science Building, contributing annually to its endowment until his death in 1957. At the Founders Day convocation on October 13, 1942, the Board named the Science Building the Pfahler Hall of Science, and a portrait of Dr. Pfahler, given by his wife, was presented and unveiled. It is not disrespectful to add that because of the rigorousness of the courses taught in it, the students soon dubbed it “Failure Hall.”

The completion of seventy-five years of collegiate education at Ursinus was celebrated in a special convocation in Bomberger on Wednesday, November 14, 1945, a week-day being chosen so that all the student body could attend. The speaker of the day was Governor Edward Martin, who paid tribute to the continuing vital role of the independent liberal arts college in American life. The other highlight of the convocation was the presentation and unveiling of a portrait of Dr. Harry E. Paisley, president of the Board since 1910, which was given by Trinity Evangelical and Reformed Church, Philadelphia. In keeping with the significance of the convocation President McClure sketched the history of the College during the seventy-five years of its life since September 6, 1870.

People who have lived for many years in a college tend to see student life as variations on a theme, “It has all happened before,” or “I remember when they did that in 1921,” provoking the cynical comment “Plus ça change, plus c’est la même
chose." But to students in each generation "their" four years are unique and they feel that they wear their rue with a difference. And in part they are right. The emphasis, the degree of popularity for this or that kind of activity, the attitudes change, at one time showing unalloyed devotion of "For God, for Country, and for Yale" and at another a blasé (they think) disdain for extra-curricular activities as "kid stuff."

In the years under study in this chapter the dominant attitude was, largely, that of loyalty and enthusiasm, perhaps not as complete as that of, say, 1908 or 1928 but strong and full. This was especially true in the musical and dramatic activities. Dr. William F. Philip, who succeeded Jeanette Douglas Hertenstine in 1935, began at once to infuse new spirit into the college choir, the glee club, and the instrumental groups—the band and the symphony orchestra, these latter then under the direction of J. W. F. Leman. He began the presentation of a light opera each spring, starting with the "Pied Piper of Hamlin" in 1936, followed by "In Springtime" (Dr. Philip's own composition) in 1937, and "The Mikado" in 1938. Others were given in succeeding years.

More importantly, Dr. Philip began in 1938 what has been a signal event of the Christmas season ever since, the annual performance of Handel's "Messiah". The first performance, before a capacity audience in Bomberger, on Thursday, December 8, set precedents for all subsequent renditions. The soloists were noted professional singers from New York and the orchestra was augmented by members of the Curtis Institute orchestra. The chorus, though it seemed large at the time, did not approach in size those of later years numbering as many as two hundred and twenty-five singers and filling not only the platform but parts of the side balconies.

Christmas was then, as it has been ever since, a merry time. Apart from programs appropriate to the season given by various clubs, the highlights were, as they have been since, the banquet on Wednesday evening before vacation when the girls ate in the upper dining room and had a competition by class in the table decorations while the boys ate in the lower, followed by a show in the gymnasium, which in 1938 featured a farce centered on "the crazy antics of mad diplomats who celebrate peace on earth by having the biggest blowout since the World War" and a chorus line of male "Rockettes", and then a dance.

On Thursday evening came the Christmas candlelight communion (a tradition since 1929) in Bomberger, conducted by Dr. John Lentz 02, the college chaplain, and Dean Kline. Then came parties for the men students, hopefully exciting enough to discourage them from going out and getting illuminated, and dorm parties for the girls, lasting as late as young bodies could stay awake. Many a student nodded in class on the last day before going home for the holidays as a result of these merry all-nighters.

Also in December each year the Curtain Club, prospering under the exciting leadership of Dr. and Mrs. Sibbald which continued until his death in 1942, pre-
sented the Schaff Play. It was no longer the first full length play of the year, for the Curtain Club now was producing four a year. The 1936 season may serve as typical of the period. The four plays of that year were Philip Barry's "Holiday", Rachel Crother's "As Husbands Go", Sydney Howard's "The Late Christopher Bean", and "The Dark Tower" by Alexander Woollcott and George Kaufmann. A year later the Club was even more ambitious in its undertaking and presented Maxwell Anderson's "Night Over Taos" among others, competed in the Cultural Olympics at the University of Pennsylvania, and sponsored three performances of the Hedge­row Theatre Players at the College. 1938 witnessed sparkling performances of "The Far Off Hills", "Time and the Conways", "Mr. Pym Passes By", and "No, Not the Russians", a delightful farce. So it went. These were halcyon years for students interested in dramatics.

After Dr. Sibbald's death Vice-president and Mrs. Helfferich took up the coaching duties and continued the tradition of lively, exciting productions which had become proverbial on the campus.

During the nine years surveyed in this chapter men's varsity sports led a somewhat checkered career. Facilities for sports were greatly increased at the onset when in 1936 the Athletic Council and the Alumni Athletic Club purchased and gave to the College a tract of 23.4 acres from the estate of Mayne R. Longstreth '89. This land, adjoining the existing campus on the north and west, included not only what had for many years been called the "College Woods" but also several hundred feet of frontage on the Perkiomen. It afforded space for the soccer field, the baseball diamond, and the touch football fields that alumni since that time all know. Two years later this new area was named Price Field in honor of Dr. John B. "Whitey" Price '05, whose exploits as player and coach have formed a part of this history.

A year after the purchase just recorded, the Board of Directors purchased an additional seven acres from the Longstreth estate to the west of Price Field, including some frontage on Ninth Avenue and the land on which the new men's dormitory complex was erected in 1967.

Although its disappearance from the campus might seem to the uninformed to have nothing to do with athletics, the removal of the standpipe from the campus in the summer of 1938 deserves its footnote in history. Erected about 1892 in connection with the construction of Bomberger Hall and the installation of a water system to supply the College buildings, it was rendered obsolete by the College’s connecting with the borough water system in 1936. As the Alumni Journal observed, word of its passing brought "a momentary feeling of regret to those who used to paint class numerals on its sides and perform death-defying antics on its seventy-five-foot ladder."

In men's athletics of a more orthodox kind, football, after a second place in the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference in 1936 (Coach Jack McAvoy's next-to-last year), stepped into a period of doldrums lasting up to and during the war. Don Kellett, McAvoy's successor, had little luck in bucking the tide and for several years Ursinus
President McClure's
Earlier Years
(1930–45)

was last in the Conference. Rock bottom was hit in the winless seasons of 1938 and 1941. During the war years schedules were curtailed, and coaches changed as one after another was called into the armed forces.

During the first years of Dr. McClure's administration a change in athletic policy that affected chiefly football was made. As "Jing" Johnson stated it, "It will be our aim to plan schedules which will bring us into competition with colleges whose scholastic and athletic aims approach ours and are in our natural field of rivalry. Games with teams normally out of our class will be discontinued, . . ." This meant that Ursinus would no longer play "money" games with teams like West Point, Lafayette, N.Y.U., or Penn, which had been warm-up games for those schools and budget-balancers for Ursinus. The change, sensible as it was, did not bring an increase in victories. What it did was to set the stage for another change in 1945 which in effect eliminated alumni control of athletics and brought it under the direct jurisdiction of the Board of Directors and faculty.

Baseball in 1936 and 1937 was equally dismal, but 1938 turned out to be a winning season and in 1940 "Jing" Johnson’s team won the conference title. As has been recorded the schedule was abandoned in 1942, and the teams fielded for the next two years were made up of men in the V-12 unit. The team in 1944 was coached by Lieut. Edward F. Hefferman because "Jing" Johnson resigned as graduate manager of athletics and superintendent of buildings and grounds on November 15, 1943. Sieber Pancoast ’37 was elected his successor in the first position and Horace E. Godshall ’29 in the second. "Jing" had been instrumental in the founding of the Varsity Club and of the Cub and Key Society in 1939. He had chaired the alumni committee to raise funds for the enlargement of the gymnasium in 1927, and during his thirteen years at the College worked to enlarge and increase the status of athletics both in inter-collegiate and intra-mural competition.

Basketball under Kenneth Hashagen fared similarly. In 1936–7 the Bears won one out of fifteen. There was no way to go but up, and by 1940–41 the courtmen achieved a winning season. When Hashagen left to enter the service, Lieut. George Miner, commander of the V-12 unit, took over the coaching chores with the result that in 1943 the Bears achieved a nine-five record. Immediately after the war they burst into a three year run of great success.

Wrestling too saw hard times under Peter Stevens, who had succeeded Kuhrt Wienecke as coach in 1936, such hard times that the Athletic Council decided in 1939 to discontinue it because not enough men turned out to provide adequate competition for positions. In fact the decision was not implemented and wrestling continued, soon to find a bright light in Richard T. Schellhase ’45, who became a Middle Atlantic champion and who while an undergraduate in the V-12 unit coached the team.

At the same time that wrestling was momentarily dropped, soccer was elevated to a major sport, perhaps because 1937 had been a good year. But for most of this period losses far outran wins, partly because Coach Donald Baker had to field
teams composed of men who had never played soccer before coming to college. Tennis under the tutelage of George Tyson also had a succession of lean years. And the track teams finished monotonously last in conference ratings until war years.

The monotony in women's sports was of a happier sort, for every hockey season was a winning one, if only by a slim margin as in 1939. But in 1943 and 1944 Snell's Belles were undefeated, and in 1945 they lost only to Beaver and Temple, placing many players on the All-College elevens. Basketball was equally successful; no season was unblemished by a loss but wins far outnumbered losses. Softball was introduced in 1941, Ursinus being one of the first colleges to introduce this sport, and the girls ran up six undefeated seasons before losing to Temple in 1947. Tennis from 1937 on saw the coeds almost equally formidable to their opponents in the great days of Madge “Bunny” Harshaw '40 and Ruth “Squeakie” Von Kleck ’40.

In non-athletic activities the decade was marked by constantly enlarging programs conducted by the Y organizations and by the clubs catering to special interests. Notable additions were two honor societies. The Rosicrucians, founded in 1934 by Dr. Elizabeth B. White, formed a permanent organization in 1939 to honor outstanding women students. In 1958 the name was changed to the Whitians as a permanent recognition of Dr. White’s key role in its founding and her concern for sound scholarship. In the spring of 1939 the Cub and Key Society was formed to honor men students who along with a good academic record have rendered valuable service in extra-curricular activities and have promoted “the best ideals and best interests of the College.” In both organizations students can be tapped in the junior year.

Annual events such as the proms and the Lorelei continued to engage students’ interest and effort. The May pageants gained an additional piquancy when some of the men students began to present a slightly irreverent parody a week or so after each year’s production, among them “Spring Fantasy”, “The Wizard of Oz” and “Tulip Town.”

Life on campus had its daily dramas and traumas, summarized well in the capsule memories of the class of 1945 which recall the ways both of peace and war on campus:

October 1941 found a new group of freshmen learning the ropes at Ursinus. We, the class of ’45, were becoming well acquainted with Price’s mystery balls, Brad’s peanut butter cake, cinnamon buns at the Bakery, and the tradition of Glenwood Memorial. The gala frosh chimes-dance at the Valley Forge Hotel was very deceptive and temporarily removed the sting from the humiliation of pajama parades and green head-bands. War was declared on Germany, Italy, and Japan that winter, and the administration at Ursinus tightened its laces. Pranks and pranksters were clamped down upon—but not before hidden alarm clocks disrupted chapel services, dining room silver sprouted overnight on sacred East campus, and Tyson was hung in effigy.

It wasn’t until we were sophomores that the male population began to dwindle. There was that never-to-be-forgotten morning when the whole student body climbed out of warm beds and went down to the station at 6:30 to give a royal send-off to the boys who were
leaving. That year again we found ourselves sharing a stray spoon with five other people until the silverware was discovered in the coal yard. But changes came inevitably, leaving constant only the mystery balls—which remained as much a mystery as ever.

In retrospect, our junior year was a record-breaking one. It started off with the entrenchment of the V-12 along the Perkiomen beach head. We benefited by an enlarged, renovated Supply Store; the football team upset Temple 10–6; at our Junior Prom we initiated the custom of selecting a Prom Queen; one of our classmates became the first girl to receive the sanction of the school on "claiming" as before to continue her education at Ursinus after marriage—proving that only the invincible combination of love and war is strong enough to alter Ursinus tradition.

Students in this era remembered with affection such familiar figures as Charlie Ziegler, with his tobacco-stained walrus moustache, and Augustus "Shortie" Johnson, short, pugnacious and profane, who cared for and scolded coaches and athletes alike in Thompson-Gay. And many a boy in the old dorms found a friend, confidante, and mother away from home in Martha Franklin, who has served longer than anyone else in the non-teaching staff of the College.

Another most notable record of service ended when on September 1, 1942 Sara E. Ermold retired from the treasurer's office. Appointed as bookkeeper and secretary in 1907 to Dr. George L. Onwake, then dean, she gave thirty-five years of efficient and devoted service to Ursinus, carefully husbanding its resources during all the lean years that have been recorded here. Coincident with her retirement Miss Ermold presented Fircroft, which she had purchased in 1926 and the College had leased since 1937, to Ursinus in memory of her mother. The work of the treasurer's office continued in the capable hands of Stanley Onwake '31 and James R. Rue, Miss Ermold's chief assistant, who compiled an even longer record of service, for he came to Ursinus in 1923 and served until his retirement in the fall of 1967.

The personnel of the faculty remained fairly stable in the years before the war. In 1926 there were no additions or losses. In 1927 two alumni who were to become stalwarts of the faculty joined its ranks as instructors, G. Sieber Pancoast '37 in political science and Charles D. Mattern '30 in English. Dr. Pancoast, as he later became, soon became involved also in coaching, and for many years the baseball teams under his tutelage achieved enviable records. When the office of dean of men was created in 1942 he was appointed to it and was dean, except during his military service, until 1959, when he was succeeded by Richard J. Whatley.

Although Charles Mattern returned to Ursinus as instructor in English, his interest and his graduate training at the University of Pennsylvania was in philosophy, to which he shifted after a few years, sharing the work of that department with Drs. Tower and Bancroft. After the retirement of the former in 1946 and the death of the latter in 1947 he became the college philosopher in more than one way, for outside his courses which were famous for their stimulation of real thought he became the counselor and guide of colleagues and students alike. He did not need the mundane and routine labors of the Bureau of Self Help, which he conducted until his death, to keep his feet firmly planted on reality. Dr. Mattern's death in
1964 was keenly felt by all who had known and benefited from his tolerance, understanding, sympathy, and wit.

The chief addition in 1939 was Elizabeth Read Foster. Educated at Vassar, Columbia, and Yale, from which she received her doctorate, Mrs. Foster taught history for two years, and then after an interval of twelve years during which she bore and reared four sons, returned in 1953 and continued as one of the bright lights of the history department until 1966, when she resigned to become dean of the graduate school of Bryn Mawr.

The next few years brought the loss through death of several prominent faculty members. Dr. Matthew Beardwood, who had joined the faculty in 1903, died in January, 1940. During his first fifteen years at Ursinus Dr. Beardwood was the chemistry department, until the appointment of Gilbert A. Deitz '18 as instructor upon graduation. In the last five years Dr. Beardwood taught only the course in organic chemistry. For thirty-seven years he commuted between Roxborough and Collegeville, all the while maintaining his medical practice.

In 1941 the College was saddened by the loss of Dr. J. Lynn Barnard, who had headed the department of political science since his return to Ursinus in 1927. The other major change was the replacement of Dr. John W. Mauchly, associate professor of physics, by Dr. John J. Heilemann, who continues in that department to the present.

1942 saw no permanent additions but two serious losses. On April 10 Dr. Calvin D. Yost, who had been librarian and a member of the faculty since 1910 (head of the department of German since 1920), died. In ill health for several years he was teaching only a few courses at the end, but his devotion to the College was unabated. He was succeeded as head of his department by Dr. George W. Hartzell, who came to Ursinus in 1934, and as librarian by Charles H. Miller '24, who had been his assistant since 1938.

The other loss came in the death of Dr. Reginald S. Sibbald, just eight days after that of Dr. Yost. “Reggie,” as everyone called him, had in his eleven years here given himself to his teaching of French, his coaching of plays, and his association with everyone on campus with a verve, a natural liking for people, and an enthusiasm that were contagious. Many a student found a second home at Superhouse with Dr. and Mrs. Sibbald.

A year later Helen Thompson Garrett, a graduate of Swarthmore and the Universities of Lille and Pennsylvania, was elected to the department of French and continues to the present. Roger Powell Staiger '43 was appointed instructor in chemistry and after serving in the Navy for two years (1944–6) returned to the College, where he is now head of the department of chemistry, succeeding Dr. Russell D. Sturgis, who retired in 1964.

The next year Evan Samuel Snyder '44 was appointed instructor in physics and after serving, like Dr. Staiger, for two years in the armed forces, returned to Ursinus and is now head of the department of physics.

When Dr. Harvey Lewis Carter was compelled for reasons of health to resign
in 1945, Maurice Whitman Armstrong was elected professor of history. A Canadian, Dr. Armstrong was a graduate of Dalhousie University and Pine Hill Divinity Hall in Halifax. He came to Ursinus from Harvard, where he gained his doctorate in 1944. In 1947 he succeeded Dr. Elizabeth B. White as head of the department, and from 1952 to 1954 was dean of the College, succeeding Dr. John W. Clawson.

The final major change was caused by the death of Eugene Bachman Michael ’24, who was a member of the department of education from 1930 until his death on November 1, 1944. Affable and sensible he had coached plays before the coming of the Sibbalds, but was known to more students and alumni through his work as supervisor of practice teaching and of the placement service. James Allan Minnich, a graduate of Franklin and Marshall and the University of Pennsylvania, succeeded “Gene” Michael in both capacities and served until his death in 1965.