

in the beginning we were very old

By C. MILES BURPEE, BScCE '23, MScCE '26

The Burning of Ana And Other Events of 50 Years Ago

By Brunswickan's First Editor

After the 1918 Armistice, the return of many young veterans of the Canadian Expeditionary Force and their enrollment at UNB ushered in a new era in the student life and activities. Spurred on by the leadership and influence of older classmates, the loosely knit Students' Association was dissolved in September 1922 and replaced by the Students' Union and the Students' Council. The latter consisted of elected representatives from each class. The success of the new form of government during 1922-23, its first year, was due in large measure to the devoted leadership of its president, Rae Hawkins and the able support of an enthusiastic Council.

Together with the change in student government came a revamping and reorganization of *The University Monthly*. "The Brunswickan" and a front cover design were selected by a committee from among many entries in an open competition to replace the somewhat ambiguous title that had served as the masthead of the undergraduate publication for more than 40 years. The successful entry was submitted anonymously and the name of the contestant has remained generally unknown to this day.

Elected by members of the Students' Union as editor-in-chief, I rejoiced in the strong support of John MacKay Anderson '23 and Bill MacNeill '23 as assistant editors-in-chief, and the following departmental assistants: Lee Lister '23, Forestry; Bob Legate '24, Engineering; Liz McMonagle, '24, Ladies Department; Edith MacRae, '24, Personals; John D. B. Harrison, '24 Athletics; Don MacRae, '24, Exchanges; and C.R. Coughlan, '25 College World.

In the absence of any appreciable amount of reserve funds, Leslie Booth, '24, did a remarkable job as business manager in selling advertising space to local and provincial companies and indeed was instrumental in clinching a contract for several insertions of a full page of national advertising for Players Navy Cut Cigarettes ("Package of 10 Now 18 cents; 2 Packages Now 35 cents") that kept the Brunswickan finances in the black for the year 1922-23.

Along with the change of name, a system of attractive distinction awards for undergraduates was inaugurated which brought about an immediate increase in the quantity and quality of editorial submissions.

Prominent among the many graduates who hailed the change as an agreeable advance was Senator Sir George E. Foster, 1868, who penned a personal letter from the Senate Chamber in Ottawa to Les Booth, under date of December 9, 1922, in which he wrote in part, "I have your letter and copy of the Brunswickan sent me therewith. Congratulations on the number which is bright, readable and shows good work by the staff and contributors." Continuing, the good senator recalled his undergraduate days and "a very young and modest Monthly", in which his first and only love story "appeared in glorious print!"

Favorable reaction among contemporaries was unanimous as evidenced by many congratulatory comments in such papers as the Acadia Athenaeum, King's College Record, the Xaverian and The Normal Gazette.

Probably The Brunswickan's most constructive action during its first year of publication, began with an undergraduate engineering study of fire protection for the University's several buildings and contents. An early editorial on the evident inadequacy of such protection brought an inspection of the property and subsequently a sharp boost in rates by the insurance people. More editorials kept the pot boiling so to speak and the editor was persona non grata in some administrative circles. However, it was that series of brief and persistent editorials that finally led to the development of a better fire protective system.

The heyday of several student activities ranged from 1919 to well along into the 20s. Despite the University's small enrollment (Class of 1923 comprised 56 Freshmen of whom 33 remained to graduate), the Burning of Ana, Mock Trial, the several sessions of Mock Parliament and the Con, all were characterized by renewed enthusiasm generated in large measure by the exuberance of the young vets.

In the absence of a dramatic society, the annual Mock Trial and the sessions of Mock Parliament were popular forms of comic entertainment for audiences of students and city folks alike.

On one occasion, when the appropriately gowned and bewigged prosecuting attorney resumed his seat, apparently satisfied that his concluding impassioned summary of the Mock Trial case left no doubt of his success, he could not resist lighting a Havana panatella that his discomfited opponent, the attorney of the defense, passed along as a congratulatory token. As the dignified attorney relaxed from his verbal bout after enjoying for a few minutes the soothing fumes of the cigar, the decorum of the entire court was rocked by the timely explosion of the loaded panatella with such unexpectedness that the attorney, leaning back at ease in a comfortable captain's chair, crashed to the floor on his derrier. The gentleman in question took the joke all in good part; and, after practising law for many years, retired not long ago as a prominent member of the provincial judiciary.

Each year, shortly after the final examination in Analytic Geometry it was customary for male Sophomore students to gather in dead of night in one of the nearby college fields and with appropriate ceremonies to proceed with the incineration of a collection of notebooks on

the subject. Deposited within a decrepit hearse or large coach of the horse-drawn type, then in common use in the city and surreptitiously obtained from a nearby source during a night in the dark of the moon, the vehicle was released to crash into a well-fueled bonfire further down the slope. In the meantime the participants refreshed themselves with many helpings of doughnuts and suds. The latter was drawn from a cooled 10-gallon keg tapped and set up at the base of a nearby tree.

More than a hundred years ago The Literary & Debating Society of the University was very active. Their first *Conversazione*, held on November 8, 1872, comprised a lengthy program of papers, recitations and readings. Mock Trials and sessions of Mock Parliament later developed from this source. Gradually the Con became a formal mid-winter ball and as such was the high spot of the social whirl after World War I.

Preparations for the Con by undergraduates began weeks in advance. Greenings sessions in the afternoons saw bangles of evergreen branches from nearby college woodlands woven into garlands and stored in out buildings later to be used in the halls and reception rooms of the Arts Building. Decoration of adjoining classrooms were projects assigned to classes whose themes were coordinated to develop a pleasing whole. Afternoon decorative activities usually were concluded with an hour's dancing and songsters around a piano in the main hall.

The Con of those days was scheduled for a short time before the beginning of Lent and the day usually was blessed with a terrific snow-storm. And, the relatively few automobiles had been jacked up off their tires and stored for winter. Consequently, transportation of the belles in all their finery, together with their beaux in formal attire, to and from the Arts Building depended on sleigh-type coaches from local hotels, two or more couples to the coach. Horse-drawn snowplows "broke" the roads up the hill and on occasion it was necessary for them to work overtime while the Con continued in order to assure return transportation through the night's storm.

Because of the relatively crude and slow methods of snow removal, it was not unusual for undergrads to snowshoe to early morning lectures following a night's accumulation of snow that ranged up to 30 inches or more. The freshly plowed tracks of the CPR were a boon to many under such circumstances.

The final act in the Encoenial exercises took place in the University's woodlands in early morning hours when a venerable muzzle-loading cannon was rolled from its camouflage, healthy charges of gunpowder were rammed home and each male member of the graduating class touched off his salute of hail and farewell to the Alma Mater. At least 30 such rounds echoed over the city and re-echoed throughout the valley in the early morning hours of May 18, 1923