

Residence Super For 15 Years

-Reg Lister Retires In Spring

By Wolfe Kirchmeir

Reg Lister has been a campus personality for over forty years. Since 1945 he has been Superintendent of Residences. In the time he has lived on this campus he came to know students as, perhaps few others have. This spring he will retire. This interview gives some of his opinions on University students past and present.

When are you retiring? "This spring." —Were your duties always the same as they are now?

"No, I did everything around here, I helped build these buildings. —You came in 1911 didn't you? "Yes I worked on No. 1 University campus, President Tory's house. I worked on Athabasca hall, Assiniboia hall, Athabasca Dining hall and Pembina hall. I did general work around the place."

—When did you become Superintendent? "In 1945." "Before that time I used to take care of everything—stores, dining hall, caretaking; and I used to help the Warden a lot with discipline in those days."

—Do you think Residence life is important to the students? "I think there's no place better for a student to live."

—Why do you think that? "It gives him confidence, he learns how to live with others, how to take care of himself, and it broadens his outlook on life."

—Do you think residence life is tamer now than it was then? Much, when this residence first opened, the average, I would say, was twenty-one. There were only one or two students under twenty, and most of them between twenty and twenty-five. They had been out quite a few years before they came to University. Today you get boys from sixteen on, there's hardly any, one or two, over twenty-one in residence today. In the early years they had to stay out a few years and work before they could come to University. The fees were not very high only \$25 and room and board was only \$25, so it didn't take much, but it took a long time to accumulate that much money with the wages they were getting before the First War. The boys who came back from the War were older than the average student then."

—Do you think students did better work? "Well, today I don't see it as I used to see it years ago. If you live with students and watch them from year to year, you can see the improvement in the boy, in his ways, in his dress, his speech, his conduct, a general improvement overall. You can see a boy become a man. It is surprising to see the change in the individuals. With some it isn't so much, others it's tremendous. The students taking medicine, dentistry, law—change more than the engineers."

"By the time a medical student is an intern he's just about finished, ready to go . . . An engineer's got to be in the field."

—What is the most striking difference between students as they were then and as they are now? "There's not much difference in the students themselves. Boy are boys the world over and they don't change very much. But they have a different technique of doing things."

—How would this technique differ?

"That is hard to explain. The students here are not the serious type. In my opinion they don't give enough time to their books. They cram for exams. But the general conduct runs the same as it ever did. You get good eggs and bad eggs."

—You mean in the old days the students were more serious about their studies? "They had to be. There were not the scholarships, there was not the money, there was no being put through on their fathers money. What they had was their own."

—Do you think the students were more mature then? "Yes, in the early days of the University, the first students we had in these residences were far more mature than they are today."

—Do you think the better facilities we have nowadays, and the higher standard of living has made students soft? "I wouldn't say they're soft. They still acquire a knowledge of life in the summer periods, a knowledge of what to expect when they finish here. And they are not so fussy, they'll take any job in the summer time. They're quite capable of doing anything anybody else can do."

—How do you think you most affected students in their life here? "I've helped them in any way I was able. If a boy made a mistake, I called them in here and talked to them myself, lots of them, not just one or two."

—Do you think campus spirit has declined? "Today campus spirit is dead as far as I'm concerned. In the early days we had a class spirit, the freshman class, the sophomore class, the junior class, the senior class. They held together from the time they were freshmen to the time they graduated. Today you have fraternities, you have faculties. It's either faculties or fraternities today which has spoiled the spirit on this campus." —You mean there's too much rivalry? "Yes, too much competition. A frat member—he has his frat, and he stays with his frat, and he's a frat member only, that's all. He sticks with his frat and that's as far as he gets. Frats have an influence on boys too."

—Wouldn't you say it was similar to residences? "It is similar to residence, except that you have a closer group." —It's more of a clique? "Yes, they're a closed group and they stick together. In residence here we are not here long enough, only about a year. Before we had boys that stayed here a full four or five years till they'd finished their course. We had a good spirit among the boys. They'd come back to the same rooms they had the year before, they'd have more respect for the University and for the residence, and there was a better spirit all round among the fellows than what there is today."

"In one year no student can know his classmate or neighbor in residence as well as he can in four or five years. The first impression when you meet a man shouldn't be a lasting one. And it stands to reason

if people live together for four or five years, that there is a friendship that never is broken.

"You can ask a residence student today sitting at a table, 12 at a table, you can ask students sitting at the head table. 'Would you mind telling me the name of that boy sitting there?' 'And what does he stay—I don't know. —But he lives on your corridor. Oh I just say hello to him in the bathroom in the morning.'"

—So what would you like to see changed most about the residence situation on campus? "Enough residences so anybody who desires to live here can stay here, and that any man, immaterial what year he comes here, if he desires, should have at least one year of residence, whether he's a freshman, senior, or post-graduate. It's better for this place, and it's better for the people."

About foreign students in residence, Reg Lister said:

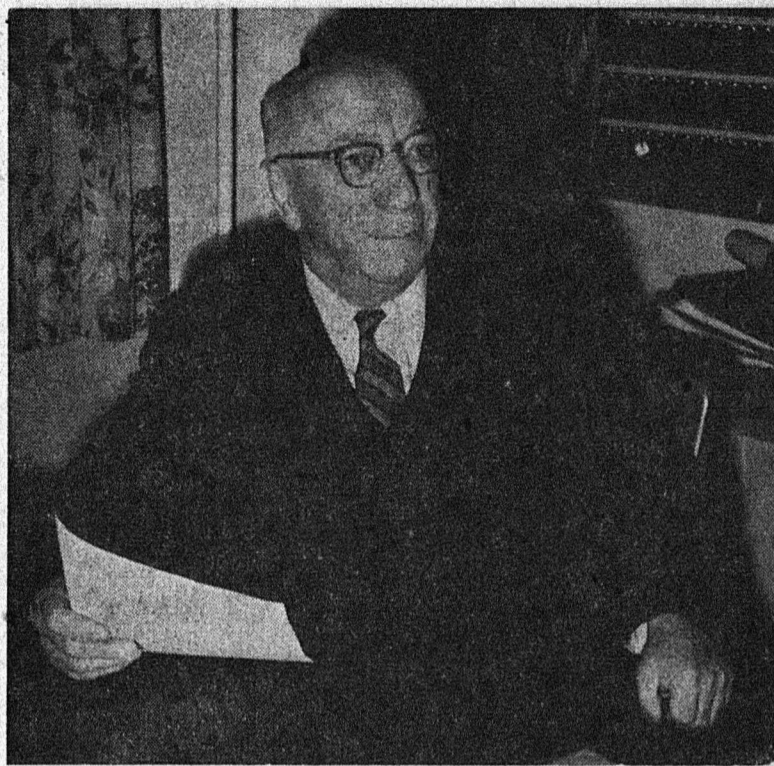
"Take those boys from Pakistan and those places. They are nice people but they don't associate enough with our Canadian boys. —Couldn't that be the other way round too? "Fifty-fifty, our boys are just as bad."

—What are you going to do after you retire? "I haven't made up my mind yet. I am undecided whether to stay here or whether to go. I have nothing to worry about, I have friends wherever I go." —Where will you be living? "I don't know, it might be in Edmonton, I have to leave my house, I think."

—What do you like to think back on more than anything else? "My best year here, for pleasure, was 1919-20. I just came back from overseas, all the boys I was overseas with were back here and we had some wonderful parties. It was a wild year, but it was a good year. We put a cannon in front of Pembina and fired it—Armistice day 1919."

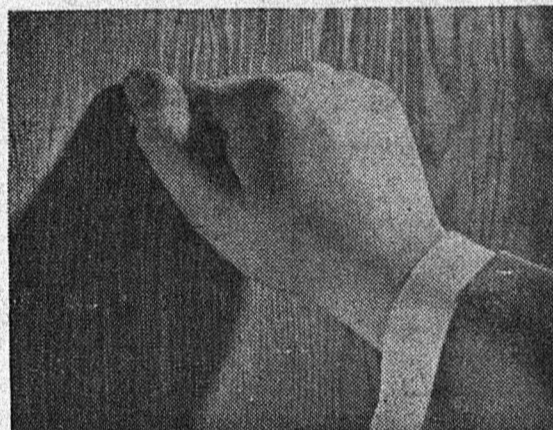
—It must have been an empty looking campus. "It was just a field when I came, a field. Mud. Field the University Hospital is, we walked there behind the sloughs by St. Josephs, right across here. Wagon trails . . . nothing else on the campus. This was all bush."

—Do you like it better now? "No. I was younger, I used to box with the kids, used to wrestle with the kids, enjoy their parties—and work hard, too."



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