LIVING IS FOR NOW OR NEVER...
WHICH DO YOU?
REFLECTIONS ON A GEORGIA TECH EDUCATION

By ROY BARNES '50

Reflecting on Georgia Tech in the 19 years since I graduated, I have been more impressed each year by the quality of the students and their deep-seated need and yearning to be inspired. They want to be helped by their educational experience to find meaningful and enriched lives, lives with higher purposes than solely to make a living.

But, because of the trade school characteristics of the Tech curriculum, great voids of educational desert confront the students. You find it virtually impossible to fill these voids on your own because of lack of time, direction, and inspiration. You are required to spend far too many hours on problem solving, and as a result have too little time to contemplate such persistent philosophical questions as Who am I?, Where am I going?, and Why?

You have little time even to read a poem and reflect on its meaning and its truths and ideas. You have little time to search for and discover a personal set of values that contemplate integrity, self-respect, dignity, love, peace and freedom of thought and action. You have little time to search for a satisfying way to fit into an obscure, and perhaps threatening, American future.

A Tech education is one long obstacle course of more and more technical courses, required and elective, in the student's school of specialization. Directors of some schools, it seems, have carried the requirement of taking all electives within the school of specialization to incestuous excess. In order to survive, a Tech student must have mental and physical stamina and discipline which are useful in making a living after graduation. However, the same could be achieved by adopting the core curriculum plan for all schools with fewer hours required in technical subjects of specialization. Then more time could be spent seeking understanding. As Bertrand Russell put it, "I have wished to understand the hearts of men. I have wished to know why the stars shine, and I have tried to apprehend the Pythagorean power by which number holds sway above the flux."

Like Russell, the students at Tech don't want to settle for a self-limiting acquaintance with mere factual knowledge. They want to transcend their technical education. Russell once said that he felt "an unbearable pity for the suffering of mankind." So too, do many of the Tech students. Because of it, they want to relate their experiences more meaningfully to society's problems and opportunities.

It seems to me that too much time
is required of the Tech student in pedestrian problem solving. You need, and recognize the need for, vaulting, soaring, inspirational thought and experience. There are too few professors who rise above the cookbook approach to teaching, too many who burden the students with meaningless and irrelevant course material.

Dr. Leslie Fiedler of New York State University said that what is needed of the teacher is not that he impart knowledge but that he open up minds, that he reveal to his students possibilities in themselves that they had perhaps not even suspected.

"It should no longer be considered a scandalous secret," he said, "that the students believe they are hiding from teachers—or vice versa, that course subject matter is at best optional, at worst totally irrelevant."

Ralph Nader, the auto safety critic, had a similar complaint. In a speech he commented that there is no dearth of excellence, but that there is a great dearth of relevance in this country's major universities and technical schools.

What Mr. Nader said is true of much of Tech's curriculum. The faculty and administration must respond to a deep yearning by the students for individual participation and expression and to their need to make contributions. Not all courses should be technical in nature.

Dr. William Haber, former Dean at the University of Michigan, claims American colleges are responding to the nation's changing educational and social climate "with the speed of a glacier." Haber said universities tend to "respond more slowly than other institutions" and that they should welcome student demands for changes "long overdue."

Individually and in small groups, students should question and prod their professors. Only by their own vocal and articulate efforts at encouragement can the faculty and administration be moved in the direction that the students want.

Small pressure groups of students in each school might effect changes in the curriculum to make it more relevant and responsive to the needs of modern life, and to force professors to improve the quality of their courses and of their teaching. Then a more meaningful and less oppressive environment will be established on the Georgia Tech campus.

These are my random thoughts on a Georgia Tech education and I have told it as I see it.

Roy Barnes graduated from Georgia Tech in 1949 and was President of the Student Body as well as ANAK.
TWO
ON THE
FORTY- FIVE
FINALS

ZAP!
A TREE GROWS IN BROOKLYN
I have been noticing it a number of times that the particular element of the study of law while outwardly championing the cause of basic rights for all Americans is actually working to undermine the very rights we claim to be defending. The matter of basic rights and the impact of interference by those in power.