

The Cornerstone

SUMMER 2007

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE RICE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

VOL. 12, NO. 1

Frank Guernsey

By Froggy Williams



Frank Guernsey was born and reared in Orlando, Florida. He literally grew up playing tennis and advises us that he remembers playing constantly as an 8–10 year old in Orlando. He attended high school in Orlando and played tennis. However, Frank made the point that there was no tennis coach at Orlando High School. His father encouraged him to play and drove him to the state

meets to participate. So, with this sort of background, Frank Guernsey won high school state singles championships in 1933–1934–1935. The meets were in Gainesville, Florida.

In today's world of torrid high school athletic programs, it would appear unthinkable that any young man, playing on a tennis court wherever he could find one, and with no coaching, could garner such an outstanding high school record. Whatever else, Frank Guernsey was a natural. Let's remember, it is in the depths of the worst depression in the history of the United States and the world. Unemployment was at record levels if one uses unemployment measurement to ascertain the impact on the Republic. No one had surplus money, and that would include public schools, colleges, and universities. Still it would have been completely unrealistic to assume this small skinny kid from Orlando, Florida, would turn himself into an intercollegiate singles champion at the then 26-year-old Rice Institute in Houston, Texas.

A review of the state of tennis is helpful in understanding how it functioned and will give some

insight into the career of Frank Guernsey. While there was a modest amount of notoriety connected with the national tennis scene, there was a thriving interest in small tennis meets all across the USA. All of these were amateur. OK, so now you ask, what about professional tennis? Well, professional tennis did not exist as we know it today. Yes, there was "big time" tennis, but there were no direct payouts to winners. All of the big time players were "amateurs." They gave them expense money, plus some "under the table monies." It may be that it was not terribly honest; still, that was the way the sport of tennis functioned around the United States. Now let's return to our hero Frank Guernsey.

Frank enrolled in the University of Florida. They would not offer him a scholarship to play tennis. Therefore he refused to compete in the tennis program there. So what is an enterprising young man to do with his obvious tennis skills? Given his love of tennis, he does what you would expect. He starts entering tennis tournaments all over the southern part of the United States. Now remember, these are all amateurs, so he is not endangering any of his college, *i.e.* NCAA, eligibility playing in these tournaments.

Question: where is his Rice Institute connection? Well, in those tournaments, some Rice tennis players are competing. Joe Lucia and Bobby Curtis, both from Rice, were playing in some of these same tournaments. However, the crucial connection was Wilbur Hess. Wilbur Hess is another whole story, but he had won an NCAA tennis championship at Rice in 1935, and had continued to compete in tournaments where he will come in contact with Frank Guernsey and become aware of his skills on the court. The Rice tennis coach is Quinn Connelly. Joe Lucia and Bobby Curtis (by the way, Bobby Curtis is an NCAA doubles tennis champion in 1946) start suggesting that Frank should come to Texas and play tennis at the Rice Institute. Frank Guernsey thinks this has merit, but he will only consider it if he has a scholarship. So Joe Lucia calls Quinn Connelly and asks him to offer Frank Guernsey a scholarship. Well, Quinn

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The Rice Historical Society

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history of Rice University*

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Rice alumni and friends are encouraged to
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of The Cornerstone. Items cannot
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Beer Bike, 1957

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Our archives are not classified. We are seeking artifacts you may have preserved, then hidden away, since your years at Rice.

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has never heard of Guernsey, so he tells Joe and Bobby that he will have to check it out. Quinn Connelly contacts Wilbur Hess for his opinion. Wilbur Hess promptly answers that he should grant Frank Guernsey a scholarship and in the process told Quinn Connelly that Frank would win an NCAA championship for the Rice Institute. With that phone call from Joe Lucia to Quinn Connelly and Connelly's call to Wilbur Hess Rice Institute athletic history was made. Frank Guernsey did accept and came to Houston in the fall of 1936 to enroll as a freshman. Rice, being Rice, was not willing to accept any of his credits for courses taken at the University of Florida. So Frank Guernsey now enters a new chapter in his young life that will change his whole direction as a student and eventually will affect his whole life.

The rules for athletes in this era called for freshmen to wait one year to be allowed to compete in varsity athletics. The time is 1936-1937. Therefore Frank Guernsey began his competitive varsity career as a tennis player in 1938. It is soon abundantly clear that Wilbur Hess is a prophet. Frank will win the Southwest Conference singles tennis championship for three consecutive years, 1938-1939-1940. There are some excellent tennis players in the conference, in particular, Bob Kamrath at the University of Texas and Lefty Brown at Baylor. However, Frank will carry his tennis career to far higher levels than the Southwest Conference. He will win the NCAA National Singles Championships in 1938 and 1939. Historically, this feat has not been replicated by any other Rice tennis player in the history of the university. Frank was also awarded the Bob Quin Award as an outstanding male athlete for Rice in 1940.

In one sense, we can consider chapter two to be Frank Guernsey's tennis career after he graduated from Rice. As a starter, Frank won the 1939 singles title at the River Oaks Invitational Tournament. River Oaks, certainly at that time, was a reasonably prestigious tournament. As you can see, this was while he was still at the Rice Institute. In 1941 he and Don McNeil teamed up to win the National Indoor Doubles Championship, defeating Jack Kramer and Bobby Riggs. Also in 1941, he paired up with Bobby Riggs to win the River Oaks Doubles Championship, again beating Jack Kramer, who had teamed with Ted Schroeder.

About this time, Frank's life starts to get complicated. The U.S. government has passed a peacetime military conscription program to build up the military capability of the armed forces of the USA. So by 1940, all men over the age of 18 are registered and eligible to be drafted. The Orlando draft board found some way to locate Frank

Guernsey in Houston. Frank was determined to join the Army Air Force instead of waiting to be drafted. After signing up for the Air Force in April 1941, he was sent to California for training to be a pilot. This was a three-step process and by the time he graduated and got his pilot's ranking, December 7, 1941, had come and gone. The United States was at war with Japan and Germany. He was assigned as a fighter pilot flying small single engine fighter airplanes. During his service career, he flew P-39, P-40, and P-47 fighter planes.

Upon graduation in 1942, his whole squadron in California was sent to the Aleutian Islands off Alaska. The Japanese had mounted a flotilla and were set to invade the Aleutians. The target was Kiska Island and a small town called Dutch Harbor. The newly minted pilots were flying planes to get there immediately to resist the invasion. They ran into inclement weather in Utah and were literally grounded for three weeks. The Japanese had already successfully landed at Dutch Harbor and taken over before the squadron could ever get to Fairbanks, Alaska. By the time the U.S. forces got organized they were able to neutralize the Japanese intrusion by regular bombing raids. This is an amusing war incident since the



Frank Guernsey, Tennis Star and WWII Flying Ace

capture of Dutch Harbor had little or no military value to the Japanese. In 1943, Frank was in Florida training Air Force Pilots.

In 1944 Frank Guernsey was transferred to the European theatre. The “D” Day landing was successful for the US-British forces, and there was a need to have complete control of the air war in Europe by mid-1944. He was based in London and flew missions until “Victory in Europe,” which means until May 1945, when Germany surrendered. He was flying support missions in the air war, bombing many German cities in 1944-1945. He shot down two of Germany’s premier aircraft during this phase of his career as an Army Air Force fighter pilot. Frank was also awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross, which is the highest award available except for the Medal of Honor. He also was given the Air Medal and eventually had 5 clusters attached to that honor medal.

So here we have Frank Guernsey, Rice Tennis Champion in 1938-1939-1940. In April, 1941 prior to December 7, 1941, he joined the Army Air Corps. He passed his pilot training and was sent to Alaska in 1942 after the war started. He helped harass a small, small war segment against the Japanese. This was sort of marking time. In 1944, he was transferred to the European section and the pace really picked up. He was thrust into the greatest air war ever fought, supporting invasion troops and escorting bombers to and from destroying the German war making capability. He shot down two German aircraft and was awarded a medal. One wonders what he could have done for an encore.

There is a wonderful anecdotal story that you need to know. The European war ended in May 1945. The British have a great love affair with their Wimbledon tennis tournament, which is a huge event. The British immediately made plans to re-start Wimbledon since peace had been secured. As a part of the program, the British powers-that-be planned a tennis match between members of the British military and Americans in the military. Frank Guernsey helped to organize and train the American entrants. As you would expect, the Americans promptly beat the British contingent as winners of this part of the Wimbledon tournament in 1945. Along the way, the Queen of England spoke to the Americans and congratulated them on their performance. It was a great ending of the war period and a return to normalcy in Great Britain.

Before Frank can be moved to the Pacific theater, the atomic bomb is dropped on Hiroshima and that ends the Japanese-American war. Frank is eventually mustered out of the Army Air Force. He takes a job with Wilson Sporting Goods in New York. In 1946, he paired up with Don McNeil to win the men’s indoor championship in

doubles, beating Pedro Segura and his partner. In this period, he also met and married a lady from New York. Frank appears to be settling down in New York. However, due to a job change, Frank’s life would also change. He went to work for SORG Printing Co. in New York. This company specialized in financial printing and was well known for quality work. By a strange twist, SORG bought a printing company in Houston, Texas, and in 1954 transferred Frank to Houston. He had longed to return to Houston, so this was a made-to-order assignment for him. Although the company prospered in Houston, a decision was made to sell the operation. Frank and his associates put together an investment group and bought the company. Forty-three years later, Frank Guernsey retired as chairman of Charles P. Young Co.

During his business career, Frank managed to enter tennis and golf tournaments. He seemingly was almost as talented in golf as in tennis. He did play tennis through the 1970s and 1980s; he was the Texas Senior Tennis Champion in 1977-1978. He continued to participate in golf tournaments and was Lakeside Country Club Champion for seven years consecutively.

Frank is now retired, living in the Woodlands, and having a quiet life. In 1989, Frank was inducted into the Men’s Collegiate Tennis Hall of Fame. At the same event, Wilbur Hess was also inducted. This is somewhat of a wonderful piece of timing since it was Wilbur Hess who was at least partially responsible for Frank Guernsey’s coming to the Rice Institute in 1936. A search of the Rice tennis history pretty well tells the story of any Rice player. It is beyond any difference of opinion that Frank Guernsey has the best credentials in the tennis history of Rice University.



*Frank Guernsey
at his home in
the Woodlands*

The Bob Quin Award Research Project

By Karen Rogers for Rice Historical Society

An interview with Quin McWhirter, nephew of Bob Quin, concerning research on award recipients

NOTE: *The portions of text in italics below are slightly modified excerpts from an article from the Summer, 1998 edition of the Sallyport Owlmanac, written by Tracey Rhoades, and it is titled, "The Mighty Bob Quin."*

Karen Rogers: *What class were you?*

Quin McWhirter: 1962, Hanszen

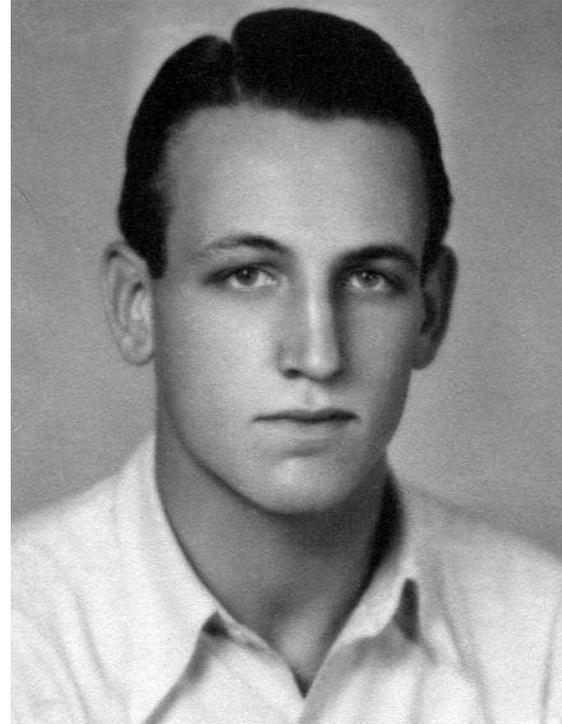
KR: *Quin, tell us something about your uncle Robert Pilcher Quin, your family, and the award.*

QM: *Robert Pilcher "Bob" Quin, the son of Bishop and Mrs. Clinton S. Quin, was a student at Rice for only a year. Educated in Houston through junior high, he attended Episcopal High School in Alexandria, Virginia. While in high school, he established himself as a high achiever. His contributions to athletics, academics, and leadership didn't go unnoticed, and in 1929, he was recognized as the most outstanding senior in his graduating class.*

Bob Quin matriculated at Rice in 1929 and easily acclimated to college life. During his freshman year, he lettered in football, basketball, and baseball and was a leader in many other campus activities. "He was a much admired young man," remembers Catherine Long Randolph '31, "and gifted in every way."

Following his momentous freshman year, he joined his family on an oceanic voyage to Europe. He became very ill aboard the ship and died four hours before landing in France. At the time of his death, Bob was in perfect health. Nobody would have ever suspected that he would never make it back from the trip. His illness was later diagnosed as typhoid fever. Soon after his untimely death, his contemporaries decided to create an award in his memory. They deposited \$250 into a trust fund and, using the criteria that had earned Bob Quin the Episcopal High School Award in 1929, laid the foundation for the Bob Quin Award.

In the bequest to the university, the donors requested that a five-member, blue ribbon committee select one student each year "whose qualities and personality guide and stimulate his fellow students in every activity" and present him with a medal purchased from the fund's annual interest. Typically, the committee consists of the President of the University, the Provost, the President of the Student Association, the Chairman of the Athletic Department and a representative from the Residential College System.



Bob Quin

By spring 1931, less than a year after Bob's death, the Bob Quin Award had become reality. Dick Jamerson, a former teammate of Bob Quin's, was the first to be recognized with the award, a 10-karat gold medal. Every year, until their deaths, Bob's parents participated in the award ceremony. They felt it was important to meet each individual receiving the award and share special memories of Bob with them.

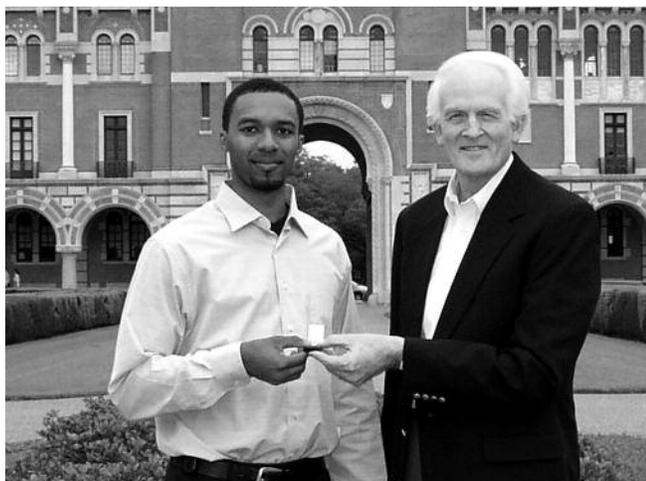
KR: *What prompted you to begin this project?*

QM: *Our family participated with Rice in the early days of the award, which was first given in 1931, and my grandfather, Bishop Quin presented it on occasion and was always present for the event. After his death, our family was not involved actively, but when my mother died about ten years ago, I felt a need to be supportive of Rice in this award which had been given for so many years in honor of my uncle and namesake. I contacted Bobby May, Rice Athletic Director, and asked if there was a way we could support Rice in remembering Bob Quin.*

He immediately invited me to begin presenting the award and to consider doing a scholarship in Bob Quin's memory. With my wife Marti, and occasionally my now

97-year-old aunt Derby Quin Hirst, class of '31 (Bob Quin's older sister), and I began presenting the award each year at the All Sports Banquet and after conferring with the family, we initiated the Bob Quin Scholarship, to be given annually to a male athlete based on need, with the winner each year to be selected by the Rice Athletic Department. The scholarship funded in only three months after we made the initial investment in it and invited family members, friends and all of the former winners of the Bob Quin Award to participate.

Because webmastering had become my hobby, I began to make a web page each year for the person to



Quin McWhirter presents the 2003 Bob Quin Award to Omar Seli-Mance. Seli-Mance is now a member of the Rice coaching staff.

whom I presented the award and also designed pages about the history of Bob Quin and of the award itself. This year, after having received good feedback from many people, I decided to begin researching all of the winners from over the 77-year history of its presentation. I began going through *Campaniles* at the Woodson Research Center and conferred with archivists there about how to do my research. I found that there wasn't nearly enough information available in the *Campaniles* to support the research I wanted to do, although I was able to get action photos and information about some of the award winners during their time at Rice.

I next went through all of the alphabetic files at Autry Court to supplement the information I had and was able to add somewhat to it, but still fell short of having a significant amount of information on each scholar athlete. At this point I turned to the internet to search for information on the Quin winners and from these searches, I found some information that I could use, and I obtained leads to other information sources, such as

the places where they were spending or had spent their careers.

Additionally, I began using the Rice Alumni Directory to find contact information for Bob Quin Award members still living and I contacted them to get any information they could give me over the phone, via email or US Mail or in person in some cases. I began receiving old newspaper clippings and photos from some of the earlier winners and electronic images and information about others. Some even wrote their bios for me, making my work much easier.

KR: *How long has it taken?*

QM: The initial writing process just took the form of designing individual web pages about nine years ago, but once I started researching in earnest, I worked on it over a period of about six months and at this point, have developed a page on each winner, although there is still information lacking on a few of them. I am presently waiting for information that is being assembled by the families of several winners who are deceased but who have scrapbooks and other sources of information they are going to share with me.

KR: *Tell us something about the process (challenges, techniques, how modern technology has aided you, sources).*

QM: Initially there weren't any challenges, since I didn't set out to do a complete historical document. Once I realized that Rice needed the information, the challenges were finding the missing information outside the walls of Rice and trying to determine efficient ways of obtaining it. The internet has given me some direct information on some Quin winners by way of their bios, resumes and CVs and in other cases, a business place to contact to get information or to speak to the Quin winner in person. I've also used the internet to search for the families of deceased winners and have had some success doing that.

KR: *Can you give us some examples of interesting or surprising connections, information, contacts?*

QM: Since I didn't know any of the winners personally, the project has been full of pleasant surprises. One early surprise was in seeing some of the people who contributed to the Bob Quin Scholarship that Marti and I initiated—former President and Mrs. George H.W. Bush and Dr. Denton Cooley, to name two. I have marvelled at how predictive the Bob Quin Award has been in looking at the achievements of its winners after

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leaving Rice. The alumni of this award include numerous physicians, professors, scientists, executives, clergymen and professional athletes. Another surprise has been that a large number of these scholar athletes were walk-ons and didn't come to Rice as a result of a scholarship. Actually meeting or speaking to them has revealed that in a group of such accomplished people, the quality of humility is present in almost every one. Many have said that the Quin award was the most significant honor of their life and some have said it helped them materially in their further pursuits. They have frequently said that the attributes required to win it have provided a model for them throughout their lives.

KR: *Can you give us some samples of what kind of information you have managed to find?*

QM: I've focused on finding academic, athletic and service information about them during high school and at Rice and any honors they received during those times, plus information about their further education after Rice, their careers and their community involvement and service in the years that followed. I learned about some of the winners like Frank Guernsey from the '40s, who went right into the military service and did remarkable things for our country. The men who earned the Bob Quin Award have truly become a group of my personal heroes and the things they have accomplished and the values that have defined them are amazing to me.

KR: *You hope to publish this work in some sort of book form. What can you tell us about your plans? What other plans do you have for this compilation?*

QM: For now, I am trying to complete my research and having an up-to-date record of the lives and achievements of as many Bob Quin Award winners as possible. Knowing that it will always be a work-in-progress, I still feel that even though it is available on the internet, there is a need for hard copy versions of it to be produced to be housed at Rice and to be made available to people who don't spend a lot of time on the computer. Even regular computer users may find a hard copy version much easier to navigate from start to finish. The document, or website as it now exists, is a part of my personal website and is also linked on the www.riceowls.com website under "athletic awards." It is my hope to turn ownership of it over to Rice if there is

someone there who will provide a permanent home for it and keep it up to date after I am no longer able to do so.

KR: *Please tell our readers how they can view a version of this work on the internet.*

QM: On the riceowls.com website, it can be accessed using the dropdown box at the top of the site called "about athletics" and from there click "athletic awards" and this will bring up a page with a list of the Bob Quin Award and Joyce Pounds Hardy Award winners. At the top of this page is a link called "Bob Quin Memorial Site" and clicking this will provide access to my site. A direct link to it can be found by copying the following link and pasting it in your browser. <http://members.aol.com/quinmarti/homepage/bquin.html>

Through the years, recipients of the Bob Quin Award continue to embody the qualities set forth by the award's originators, and their achievements are innumerable. As a track and field standout, Adam Reiser, the 1998 award winner, attracted global attention when he managed to collect, ship, and distribute more than 500 pairs of used running shoes to needy young runners in Kenya. Other notable recipients include Harry Fouke '35, a former football player and longstanding athletic director at the University of Houston; Dick Chapman '54, Rice's first Academic All-American; Fred Hansen '63, a gold medal pole vault winner in the 1964 Tokyo Olympics; and Leland Winston '69, who subsequently became the Rice team doctor.

Since 1931, the Bob Quin Award has been presented annually, without interruption. Each time I am privileged to meet a former winner, I feel like I am meeting my uncle Bob Quin. You see, he died ten years before I was born and this endeavor truly brings him to life for me.



2007 Bob Quin Award winner Luke Stadel (second from left) with (from left to right) Wendy Hirst Fredland, niece of Bob Quin, Derby Hirst (sister of Bob Quin), Quin McWhirter (nephew of Bob Quin), and Dr. James Castañeda.

FROM THE ARCHIVES

By Alan Bath



Baseball

As we bask in the current success and popularity of Rice Baseball we note that it was not always that way. In 1932, the February 17th *Thresher* headlined “Baseball Dropped as Rice Sport.” “Honor Court action against several key players, coupled with a dispute over the number of games to be

played, prompted the Athletic Department to drop baseball as a Rice Sport in the Spring of 1933.”

Visitors

The decade of the 1950s brought a wide variety of famous people to Rice. Among them:

General Dwight D. Eisenhower, President of Columbia University, spoke in the Fondren Library (November 1950)

Leopold Stokowski, conductor of the New York Philharmonic Orchestra, presented a formal lecture. (December 1950)

“**Pete**” **Seegar**, ballad singer, lectured on folk music at the library (March 1951)

Miss Minerva Bernardino, UN delegate, who was voted Woman of the Year for the Americas in 1950, discussed the Status of Women in Latin America. (April 1952)

Walt Kelly, originator of the Pogo comic strip, spoke on the “Political Background of Pogo.” (October 1952)

Dr. Julian S. Huxley, former Assistant Professor of Biology at Rice, returned to lecture on “The Evolutionary Process and Man’s Place in it.” (October 1954)

Dr. Leonard Carmichael, Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, spoke on “The Making of the Modern Mind.” (March 1955)

“**Dr.**” **Ronald Reagan**, well-known film and TV star and holder of an honorary PhD from Eureka College, Illinois, was a dinner guest at Hanszen College. (October 1957)

Music

In December 1950, Mrs. Sallie Shepherd Perkins presented a gift of \$350,000 to the Rice Institute to establish a school of music. President Houston stated that the fund was not sufficient at present to construct and equip buildings at the present time; therefore the fund will be allowed to accumulate until further endowments for music study are received.

—*Thresher*, December 8, 1950

Beer Bike

The *Thresher* reported on April 12, 1957 that “tentative plans were being made for the first inter (and intra-) college competition under the college system, a bicycle relay race. The race is to cover a 15 mile course, with each team riding five miles, dismounting and drinking “an unspecified quantity of beer” before the relieving team may begin the next segment. The first beer-Bike took place May 5, and was won by a Baker College team of ten men and two women in a time of 68.4 minutes. Hanszen, disqualified in the race for taking a short-cut, won the beer-consumption part of the event. It is probably only coincidental that the rider who rode the winning lap for Baker was named Coors.



Beer Bike Participants and Helpers, 1957

Still Another Headline:

“OWLS’ Follies Skit Entertains Students at Mortuary School”

—*Thresher*, December 8, 1950