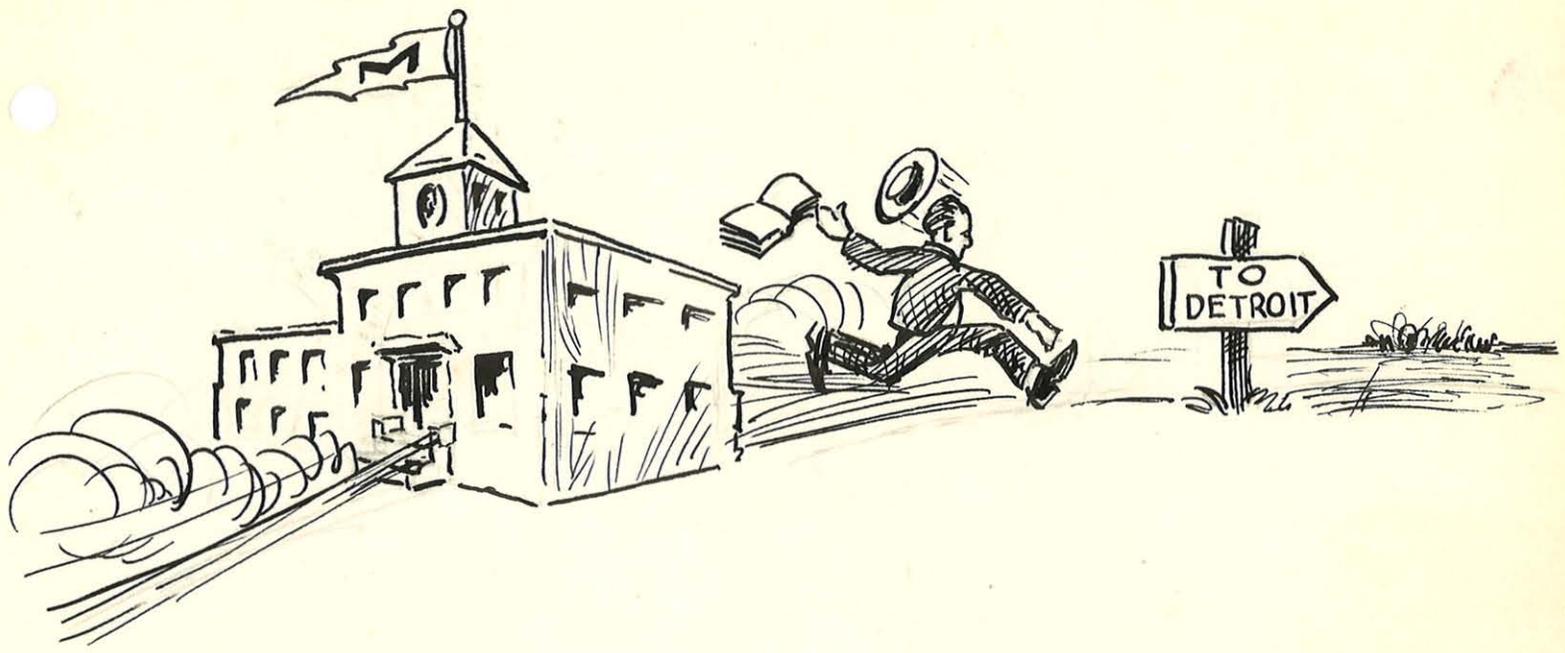
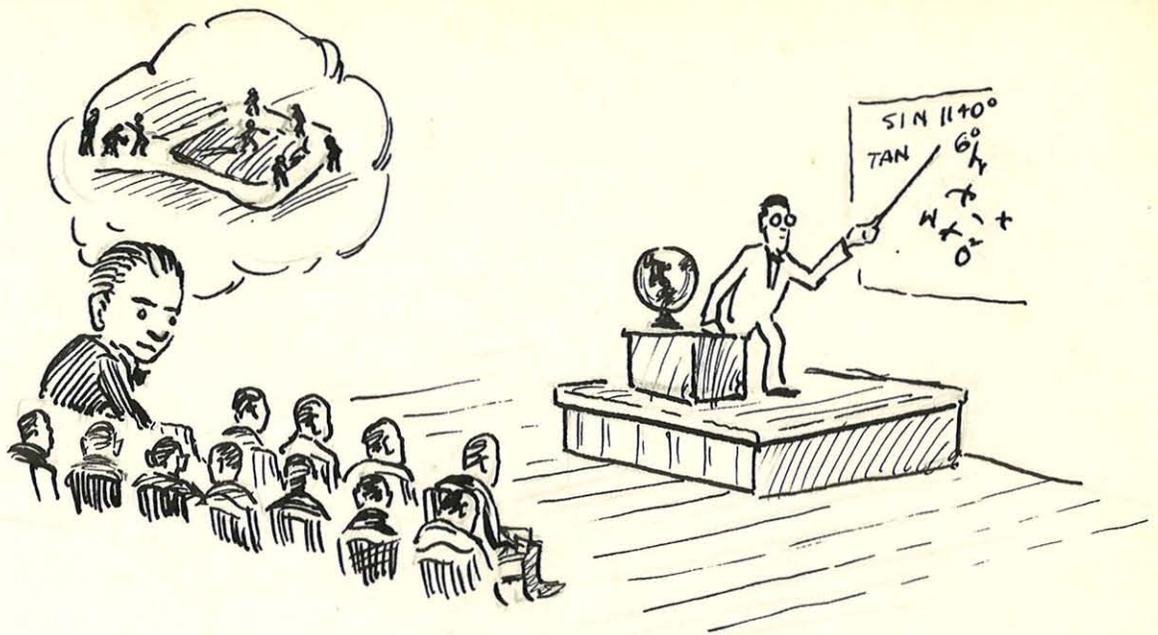


the  
short happy college career  
of  
forest akers

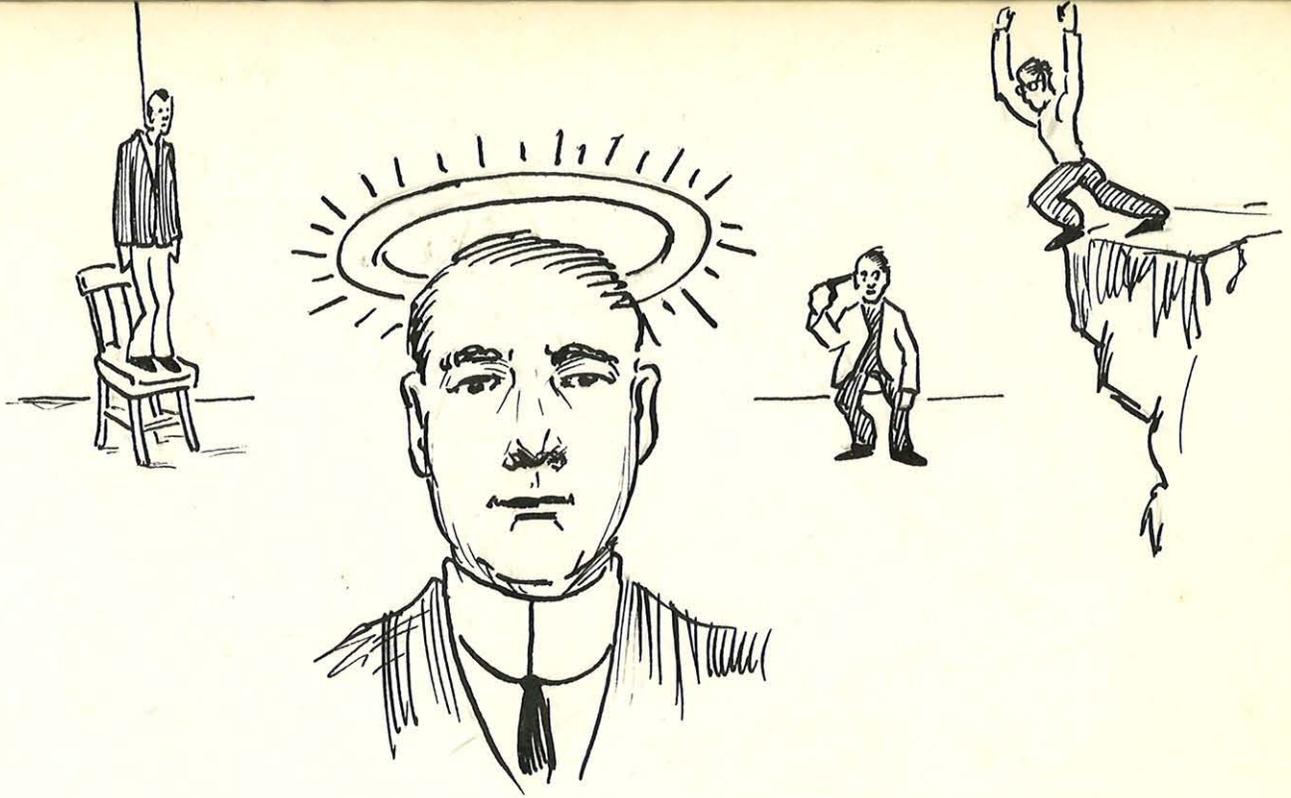




Those of us who have known Forest Akers through the years have come to know that everything about him is brief and to the point. And there are few things any more to the point, and certainly very few things any briefer than his college career.



When Forest embarked upon the seas of higher learning in 1905, Michigan Agricultural College boasted of some few thousand-odd students, - and Forest was one of the oddest. Right from the start study held a peculiar fascination for him, and he could sit for hours and watch the other students working at it.

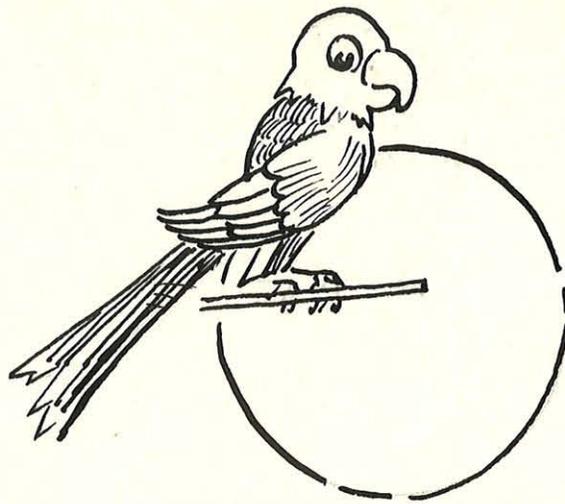


By the spring of 1906, the faculty realized that it was taking the university considerable time to adjust itself to student Akers. Michigan Agricultural College didn't know what they'd do without Forest - BUT THEY'D RATHER. Forest was a typical student, as students go, and, as students go, he went - in 1906. In typical Akers fashion he established a brilliant precedent by getting out of college a full three years ahead of his class. It was sort of a compromise; Forest changed his status, and the university, seeking a fresh and less confusing start, changed its name to Michigan State University - and both have been doing very well ever since.



If, back in 1906, someone had informed the faculty that today, forty-one years later, Forest Akers would be here at the Astor in New York, no doubt they would have charitably expressed the hope that he was making well on tips.

Forest brought with him to college an excellent family background. He had come from a splendid family, and for generations back his family history revealed the very finest American stock. However, it appears that the university did not contemplate using him for breeding purposes.



Students for years on end have emerged from their  
respective alma maters with a variety of impressive  
degrees. I know of only one who came out with the  
nickname ---- "Polly."





It has been said that Forest Akers never ran from anything - and this is almost the truth, but not the whole truth. (Half the lies they tell about Forest aren't true.)

Back in 1905, when Freshman Akers was eyeing the college with a studied nonchalance, and the college was eyeing Freshman Akers with wide-eyed wonderment, Forest established a cross-country record surpassed only by the famous ride of Paul Revere, and unequalled by any other biped.

Back in those days, even as today, the upper classmen took particular delight in "hazing" freshmen. This, mind you, was long before the time when freshmen were so easily recognizable, and they very closely resembled people. Their fate depended upon

their ability to escape detection. The best defense, as all freshmen knew, was to affect the air of a stranger in town, until the danger was past. Of all the accomplishments of Forest Akers, and their number is legion, affecting the air of a stranger in town is not one of them. Freshmen who fell into the hands of the upper classmen were soon traveling the streets of Lansing on all fours barking at the moon.

One night, as was his frequent custom, "Polly" had neatly arranged his books in his room and taken off for town, where he came face to face with a group of sanguine sophomores. The moment was a tense one. It was a time for decision. Two courses confronted him: He could have faced the crowd with outward calm and asked directions to the nearest hotel; or he could have faced them with nerve of iron and phlegmatically announce: "Gentlemen - proceed with your little fun. You'll find Akers a man of steel." On the other hand he could have run like a frightened gazelle.

Then, as now, Forest was equal to the occasion. He ran - like all the hounds of Hades were hot on his trail. Up hill and down, through Lansing's main streets dashed the Vice-President of Dodge Brothers, with the hot breath of twenty sophomores on his neck.

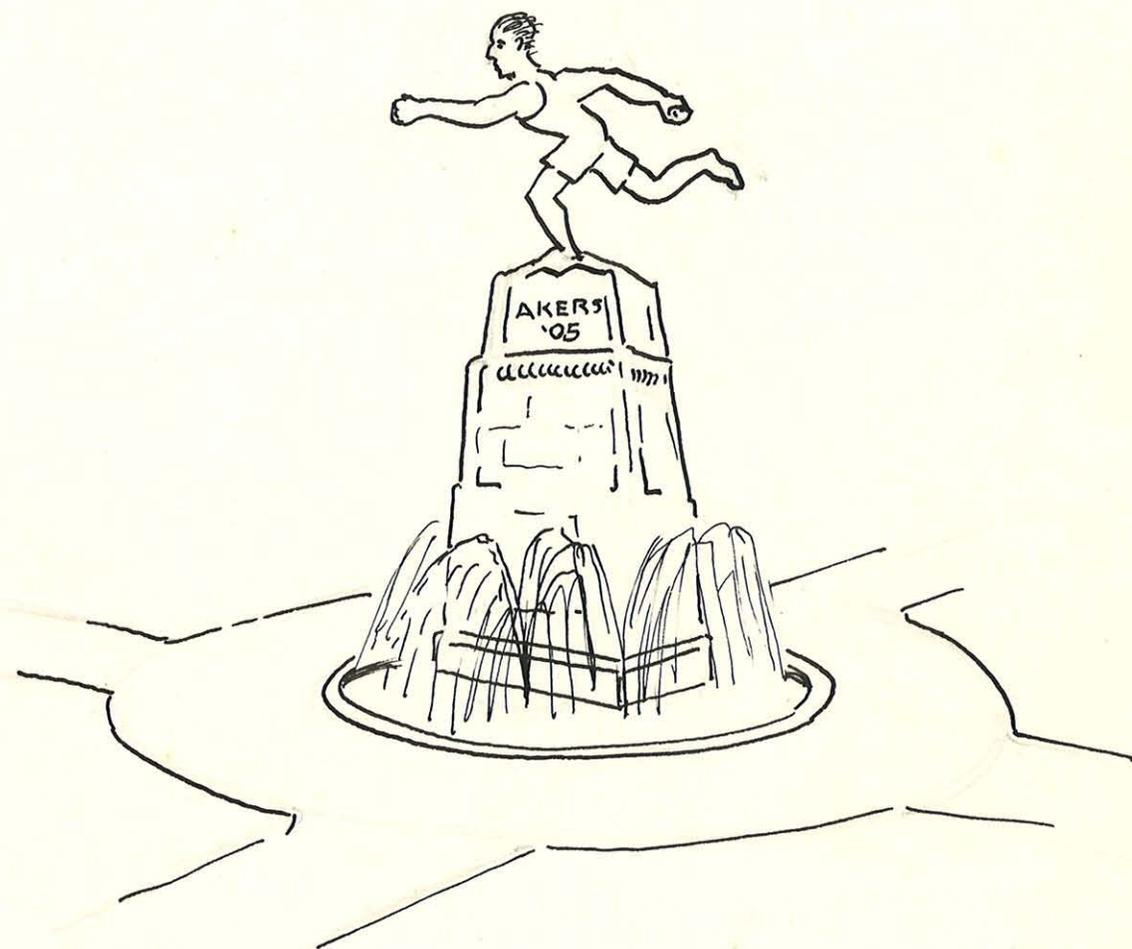
Michigan historians are still trying to explain the strange phenomenon which swept like lightning through the streets of Lansing in the fall of 1905. Many an old Michigan student recalls the heroic poem inspired by Polly's mad flight:

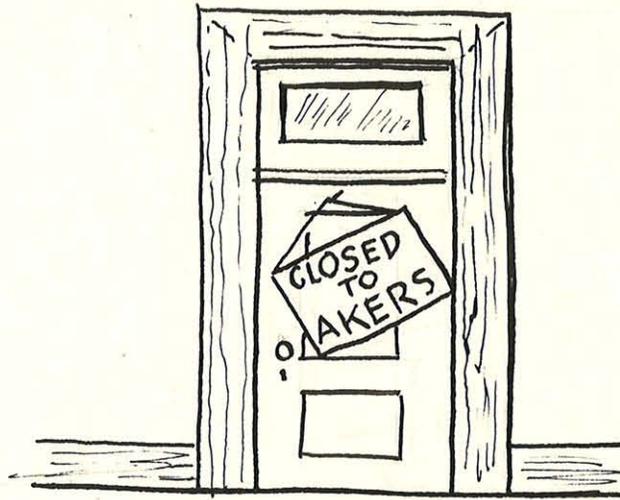
"Listen, my children, and you shall hear  
Of a man who outdistanced Paul Revere.  
In early fall of nineteen-five  
Many a man is now alive,  
Who remembers a group of sophomores jolly  
Chasing the hell out of Freshman Polly."

Up the boarding house steps, four at a time, raced Polly. Whether he opened the door or leaped clean through the keyhole remains somewhat of a mystery, and is for scientists and mathematicians to dwell upon. Forest isn't clear on the point. I only know, from an unimpeachable source, that he made it. The standing rule of the period was that any freshman fleet enough of foot to gain the inner sanctum of his boarding house was as safe as safe can be.

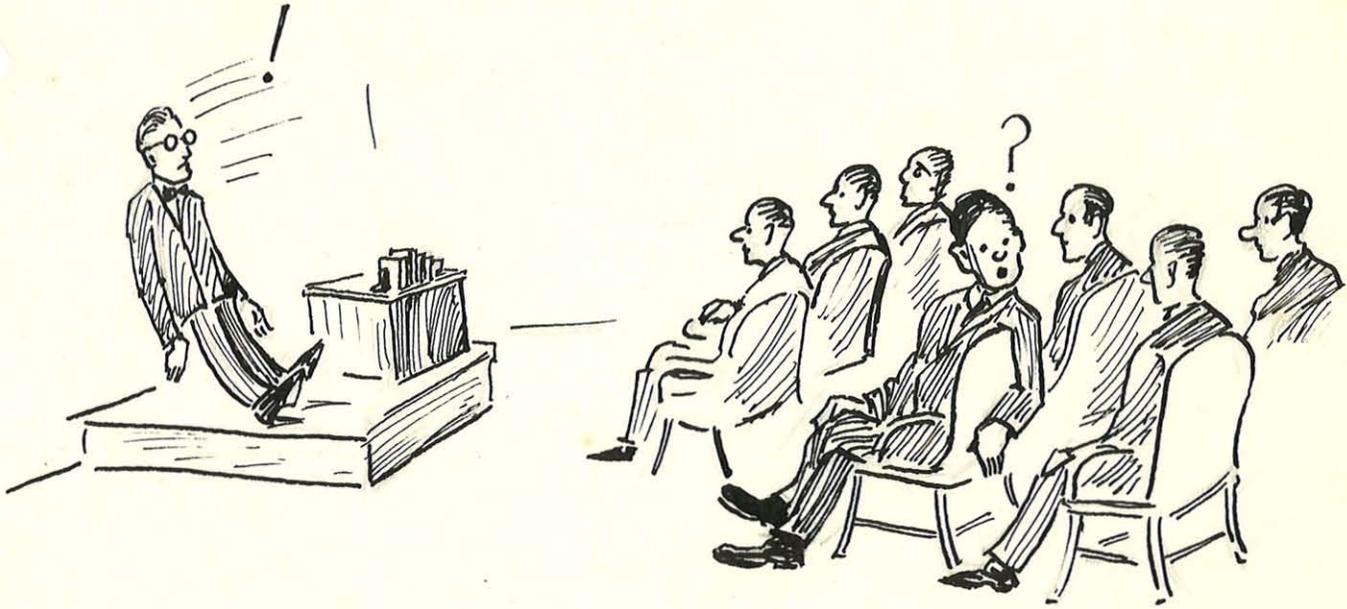
Forest, exhausted, lay panting on the bed for some time. Then he turned to his roommate and said:  
"Wells, if I had that to do over again, I'm not so sure I wouldn't take the hazing."

That probably was the last time Forest Akers ever  
ran from anything.





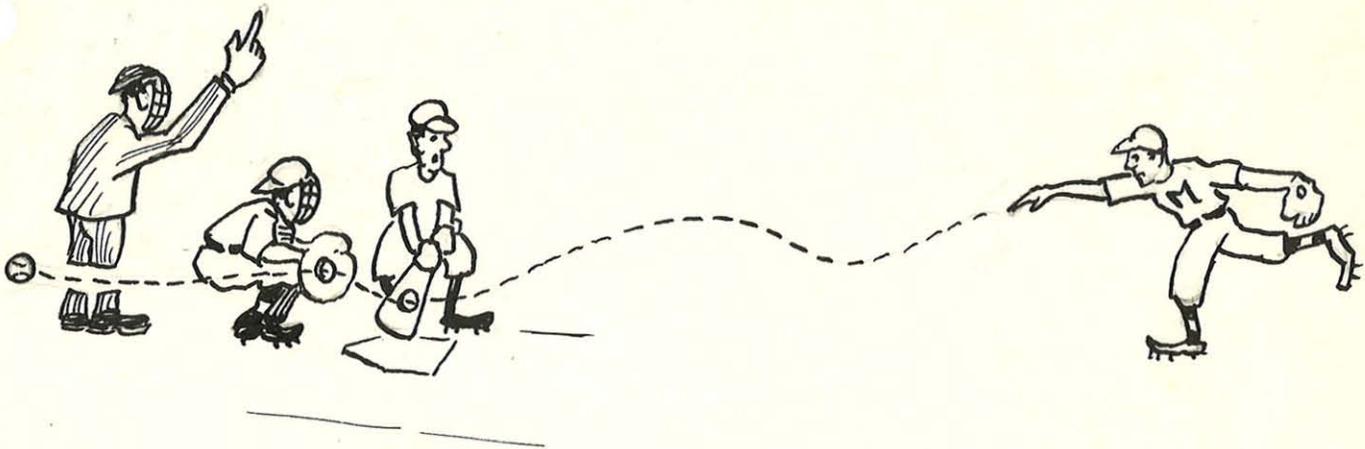
So hectic was the brief career of this stormy petrel of Michigan that hours could be spent just sketching over the highlights of his checkered career. Forest, no doubt, will remember old "Doc" Kedzie, his chemistry professor. Polly, who didn't share the good professor's views on punctuality, sauntered into class ten minutes late one day and was ushered out with much gusto. Next day, the professor, following his usual custom in such cases, asked Forest a question from the preceding day's instructions. "Professor," said Forest earnestly, "I wish you had asked me that yesterday."



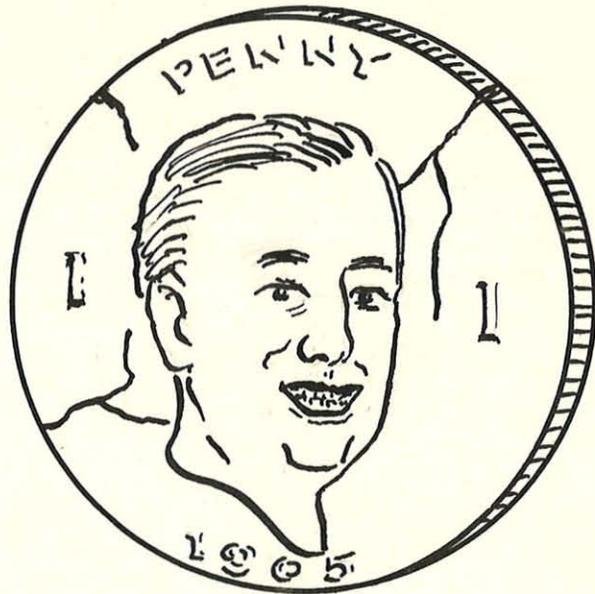
Polly didn't like college generally, studying particularly, and physics specifically. When Professor Chapman (Remember - Forest?) was conducting the spring examination, Forest occupied a front seat armed with a sharp pencil and a strong desire to be somewhere else. The professor wrote the first question out on the board and all the students (or nearly all, for there was Polly) would dash off the answers on their papers. Polly squirmed his way through question one. A look of disdain came over his face as question two appeared on the board - he shuffled uneasily and gazed out the window into the beautiful world beyond. Question three did it. Polly gently placed his pencil on his desk, turned around to his roommate in the seat behind him, and calmly said: "Wells - just what the hell are they talking about?"



Polly's tastes ran more epicurean than educational in those days. He was most unhappy with the quality of food he was exposed to at his boarding house, which he had dubbed "Ptomaine Tavern." He promptly embarked on some missionary work and discovered a Mr. Dixon who ran a boarding house and who made frequent trips to Pine Lake for frogs. A little subtle questioning by Polly revealed that Mr. Dixon served frog's legs at his boarding house every Sunday. In almost quicker time than it takes to relate it, Polly announced to his roommate that they were moving, that he had given notice already, and that they would have to move in time for next Sunday's frog's legs. His decisions were apparently as swift and as certain then as they are today.

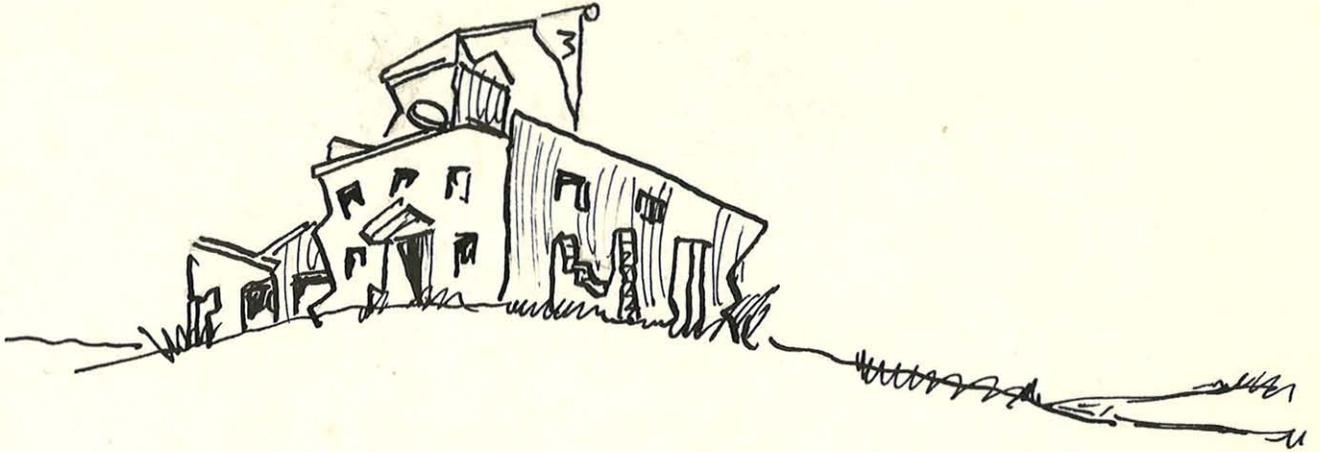


Had there been academic honors for baseball, Polly would have emerged cum laude, and nothing less. He delivered a blazing fast ball, the like of which hasn't been seen on the athletic field since. Polly's father once made the statement: "I only hope that Forest finds something he likes as well as baseball - and can do as well." To the everlasting gratification of Chrysler Corporation Polly did just that! For all we know, he may be secretly planning to take over the reigns of the Brooklyn Dodgers next spring. If so, I'd be the last person in the world to question his ability to be completely successful. Polly has a way of performing difficult tasks with ease, and works a little harder accomplishing the impossible.

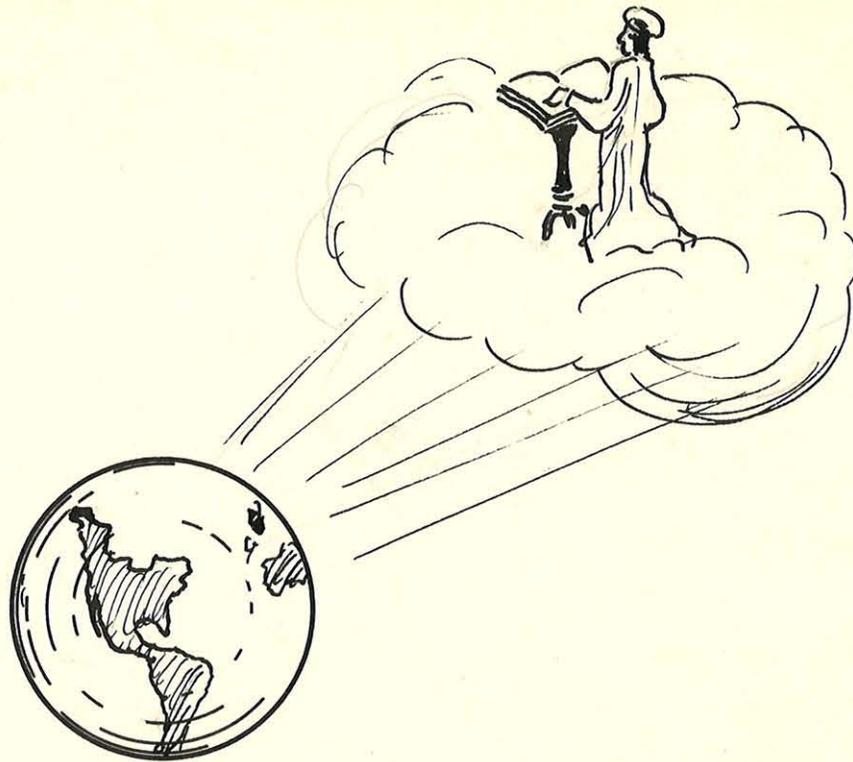


If there's any joke to the statement that Polly was voted the "most likely to go to seed - class of '09" the joke certainly is not on Forest Akers. Today he is a member of the Board of Agriculture in the institution where he chose to have his education neglected. And an influential member, too. It was primarily through the efforts and judgment of Forest Akers that the present president of Michigan State was appointed.

"I know people," Forest said simply, "And there is the man." Michigan State listened to Forest Akers and followed his suggestions. The "Bad Penny" of 1905 returned - and is honored and respected by the powers that be at Michigan, just as he is, and always will be, by all of us.



Recently his old roommate visited him in Detroit, and praised him for all the things he has done for the old alma mater. "I ought to," replied Forest, "I did enough damage while I was there." That's the kind of a fellow who makes America - America.



I am sure that when Forest has rounded out his long and useful span of years on this low mundane sphere, and the celestial books are balanced, that he will not be held accountable for the "damage," as he puts it, to Michigan State. And that the credit side of the ledger will be heavy indeed with all the good things that have come about through our "Polly."

