

CHAPTER VII

RECREATION AND CO-EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES

In recent years recreation has come to occupy a more and more prominent place in programs of physical education. The national professional association in this field has recognized this fact by adding the term to **its official** title. This certainly was not done because the previous title was too brief to be dignified.

Various factors have tended to call attention to the importance of recreation. Technical advances in industry have shortened working hours and increased leisure time. The alarming increase in mental cases leads to a search for safety valves to decrease nervous tension. Education generally is showing more concern for the total development of the individual. Daily life is increasingly sedentary for many individuals. Active recreation is needed to secure the bodily benefits of exercise. In view of the above, it is not surprising that recreation has come to the fore in the mind of those concerned with physical education.

A factor which has held back the development of recreation programs has been the shortage of facilities at the times available to students. There is a peak load in late afternoon because of intramurals and varsity athletics meeting at this same time -- a time usually best suited to recreation. The pressure of inter-school athletics has taken time and money in many cases so that intramurals and recreation have had difficulty in getting much attention.

A disposition has developed to separate intramural activities and recreation on this basis. Intramurals have been considered as having to do with competitive activities. Many think of recreation as non-competitive, where participation is relaxing and engaged in for fun, for a change of scene, etc. Activities such as canoeing, fishing, horseback riding, social dancing are entered into without the strain of competition. But when viewed in a little broader way, the purposes of recreation and of intramurals are essentially the same. The activities are engaged in for fun, there is little serious practice involved, and the end results of all such activities well conducted are recreational. Since the underlying philosophy is so much the same, it would be well for intramural departments to give more emphasis than has been usual to the various types of non-competitive recreational activities. If there is any necessity for this, nearly all these activities can be adapted to a point system anyway -- so much credit for a ten mile hike, for an hour of horseback riding, or for meeting certain standards of knowledge or performance in any activity. An example of what can be done in a competitive way with a non-competitive activity is well illustrated in public school music. Some of these art competitions attract thousands of competitors annually.

The primary concern in any activity program should be the welfare of the contestant. So long as he has a good time and feels that he is getting something out of it, he is not going to be very much concerned about whether what he participates in is called recreation or intramural competition. The need is for an activity that will help him. Some of the most effective mental hygiene hinges around recreation. This point is amply demonstrated in the remedial programs of mental institutions. There is a need for physically active pursuits that will help to balance our generally indoor and sedentary type of life. The various parts of the entire program in health and physical education should supplement each other. The required classes, the intramural and recreational activities, the varsity athletics, the health service, supervision and instruction should all dovetail in such a way as to meet the needs of the individual.