KU --- Do You Remember?

Persons of color were not yet admitted to all places of business on Massachusetts Street. Students wanted football, then a family car. Ike was there, Nixon too and Joe McCarthy. Communists under every bed, in the woodwork.

From a clearly objective viewpoint (the bedrock of American journalism) it's all very cold and ugly. The KU Jayhawk now sets directly in front of Strong Hall (go look at it). Emblazoned upon its pedestal:

1956

jumps out at the passer-by, set in granite, memorializing a mentality which this nation may never live down.

It's all very funny now, in a way. Maybe a little foreign--maybe not. The '70s, among other things, has become the decade of nostalgia. Things are getting so damned lousy that lots of folks are trying to relive those grand and glorious days of the '50s. (Ignore the bomb--it'll never happen.)

In general our society has learned a lot in these 20 years. People are a lot smarter anyway. We know we can't trust anyone with lots of power or money (or both.) We know we must work with nature, harmonizing with it, instead of fighting it.

In 1956, the stone bird, the granite Jayhawk, bestowed its symbol upon the University. Recently whisked away from its obscure hiding place beneath the north wing of the Kansas Union, it was dropped as a leaden ball in the heart of the University community. The loud "thud" frighted us into complacency, apathy. Its utter coldness robbed our hearts of the natural

warmth within. The modern University, complex giant, has turned upon the spirit of its creators. The founders of the great medieval universities would turn in their graves.

Look around you at the neatly-trimmed rows of shrubs and the yards and yards of concrete. Stop and look at the pride of the University, the new buildings on campus; nothing less than monuments to architectural depravity. Stop to consider the role of the University and your concept of that role. Stop to consider the nature of the men and women who operate the institution--often quite invisible.

The KU campus looks worse today than at any time in the last 25 years. Its trees have died. Many of its beautiful native limestone buildings have been demolished. The whole flavor of the school has changed; from an enrollment of 8,500 in 1956, to 14,500 in 1966, to over 20,000 in 1976. Bigger, bigger, bigger; but not better.

Now the bird is there to remind us of the past, the '50s. Once again, students, by their own admission, are more interested in their own lives, getting a job, a house and a two-car garage--a piece of the American Dream. "Go to college, get ahead."

The American Dream, buried in the '60s, has been dug up for the '70s. We can't afford it now. The crush of people and shortages of resources demand that we band together and work for a common good.

The University should be a force of change, positive change. But instead, the University of Kansas has become a reactionary institution. The same problems of centralized power that exist in big business and government--too big, too bureaucratic, hierarchical inaccessible and unresponsive--exist in the University of Kansas.

It's a concentration of power and wealth up on Mount Oread. If you don't believe it, look around. Where are the people who became so smart, who learned to distrust power and wealth and embrace nature ? They have become part of power and big money which is raping nature today. Just look at the campus itself.

Look at the stone bird, the granite Jayhawk, dropped like a leadened ball into the heart of the University community.

Who put it there anyway ?

Maybe it's military madness. Maybe it's just plain insensitivity. Maybe its just 1976.

Suppose Nobody Cared?

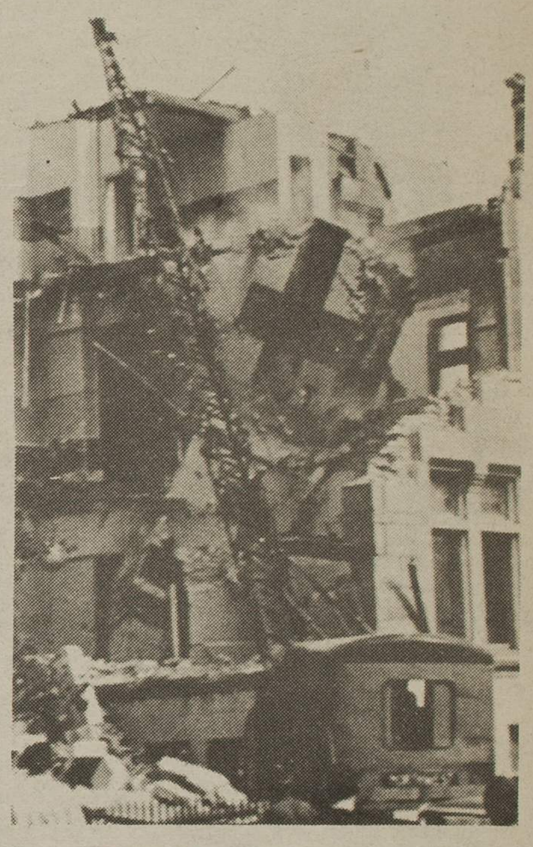
--an essay on the de-beautification of the K.U. campus...

Old Blake Hall 1895-1963

"The sandstone front of the Physics building looks like a speckled chicken. The Regents should think twice before accepting unconditionally the sorry looking structure with its chubby, freckled face, its one eye with a cross above it, and its monstrous hat."
---University Review, 1895

In Memoriam

The University Review damned Old Blake as a monster in 1895. In 1963, after the building had been standing idle for 11 years, it was reduced to rubble. Any guesses about what the University Reviewers would say about New Blake, or New Fraser ?
R.I.P.



Rrrrip!! Blake Hall, 1963

"Only the University has permanence. She will be here tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow, but we will be gone."
--Chancellor W. Clark Wescoe, 1968

CAMPUS, KU, INDIAN SUMMER APPROACHING--Buildings and Grounds workers came with orders, a sickle and a riding mower to the Prairie Acre. It took less than an hour to turn chaotic wildlife into a trim, neat acre of ordered landscape.

While on Mount Oread, have you ever stopped to look upon the sole piece of virgin land owned by the University of Kansas in Lawrence?

Virgin land: unaltered, undisturbed, natural.

It's a few steps south of Blake Hall; political science. It's surrounded by a little rock fence, defining a single acre of ground.

Beneath a tree lies a plaque of dedication:

> THE PRAIRE ACRE
>
> Whereon is set this block of Oread limestone to mark and preserve Nature's sweet fashion of making her garden.
>
> 1932

KU's Praire Acre reeks of irony. It's the perfect symbol of man's flight from nature--towards a future shrouded by heartless sterility.

Nature is not sterile...it is beauty in its purest, most unassuming form. Nature is virginal. It is self-regenerating, self-sustaining.

Now look again; my virgin acre, rock fence that guards her.

She's been breached and broken. A little hole in the rock fence allows for the passage of a University lawn mower. In the spring and summer, you know when the land greens and grows, my little acre thirsts, she longs for new life. But now the freedom is robbed, betrayed by her very protectors.

New values now, not mine, not yours--not human. The hillside grows wild...it's unsightly. Crack the whip--alter nature--conquer it.

Chancellor Archie Dykes commands the Hill and he should lovingly preserve the beauty. I am ashamed of the University. I pity Dykes, for his heart is surely cold. He has no place next to nature, no right to guardianship of our Hill...

I swear I would carry the stone to patch the little rock fence myself...saying "No more of this. We'll do much better now." But to what end, if not other voices be heard? Open your hearts and your minds to the world around you, near you. Guard it. Unaltered, undisguised--it might not be here much longer.

Chancellor Archie Dykes' home overlooks an obscure spot called the Praire Acre.