

It's nice when people take time to say thanks.

In an opinion piece published in the Southeast Missourian in Cape Girardeau, alumnus Peter D. Hilty, AB'50, AM'51, PhD'58, expresses gratitude for the education he received at "MU" ("In our time it was not necessary to add Columbia," he notes). Moreover, he started a trend. "After I went to Columbia, a number of my nieces and nephews followed me," says the English professor at Southeast Missouri State University. The education of this "Morgan County delegation" at Missouri has been as important to their careers as mine has been to me, he says. "The University of Missouri has been a powerful force in, not only my life, but in the lives of many around me."

Hilty was an English instructor at Mizzou for six years while pursuing his doctorate. He also taught at Park College in Parkville, Mo., and Arkansas State College in Jonesboro before settling in Cape Girardeau in 1962.

Everytime he goes home to Morgan County, Hilty hears conversations punctuated with University references, deepening his appreciation for Ol' Mizzou.

Here is his article.

SPRING DAYS BEGIN EARLY for my nephew, Bob, on his dairy farm in central Missouri. He is up at 5, milking his herd of 50 Holsteins, four at a time, without once stooping in his new milking parlor. This is the day that the Dairy Herd Improvement Association representative is weighing the milk, and that takes a little extra time. Each cow's production is weighed, but Bob reflects the trouble has certainly paid off. His herd has doubled in production in the last 10 years through careful management and record keeping, herd culling and the use of production tested dairy sires.

RESULTS ARE EVERYWHERE apparent as he looks about the farm this bright May morning. They have just finished remodeling the 70-year-old farm house. The dairy barn is new. The two silos are fitted with unloaders and feeders. He remembers the

farm when he was a kid and they made some spare money selling cream and eggs to the local produce house.

His wife, Kathy, has been reading some new thoughts on farm diets in bulletins from the University of Missouri Home Economics people, and these thoughts are apparent on the breakfast table. They eat quickly, but the Morgan County farm agent arrives before they have finished, and the two are off to run contour and terrace lines in a field that showed some erosion last winter.

BOB IS BACK TO THE BARN by 10. A cow is having trouble calving, and the local veterinarian (a Mizzou alumnus) arrives to assist. While he is there, he tells Bob of problems his neighbor is having with his swine herd, and that he had taken a pig to the University's Diagnostic Lab in Columbia for an autopsy. The veterinarian asks about Bob's corn and beans, and the farmer tells him



**PETER HILTY
SAYS
THANKS**

that his grandfather, who died last winter at the age of 95 (all of which he had spent on the farm) had told his grandson that he had never seen the farm produce so abundantly. "Better seeds," Bob says, "and better tillage and lots of luck. My corn averaged over 100 bushels per acre last season. When I began, I was lucky to get 25."

Kathy had planned to go to the Farm Extension Club in the afternoon to listen to the home demonstration agent show microwave cooking, but a neighbor calls asking for help to get to Columbia to visit her husband, who has recently had a four-part coronary bypass at the University Hospital. Bob and Kathy plan to visit their son while there, himself an intern at the hospital, but when they call they find he is assisting at an autopsy. They do learn that his wife, who has just finished a degree in education, has landed a position for next year in Boonville.

AS THEY DRIVE HOME, they listen to a spirited debate on minimum tillage on the radio. They stop, too, at a roadside stand to buy some early strawberries — a new variety developed by the University. Before he starts milking, Bob takes time to look over the farm records that have arrived from the University Mail-in Record Program. The analyst suggests in a note that the dairyman should sell his older cows a year earlier than is his practice; Bob simply grins.

While Bob waits for supper, he watches the news on KOMU-TV, the University owned and operated television station. Later he and his wife put on their best clothes and go to the local church to hear the University Chorus, on spring tour, give an all-Bach concert. They are in bed by 11 and Bob lies awake, listening to the first mockingbird of the season, remembering what the ornithology professor at MU had said about mockingbirds and recalling bits of what an English professor commented about Whitman and mockingbirds and wondering what to do when poets and scientists disagree.

With the mingling of Bach's counterpoint and the mockingbird and dairy herd improvement figures he falls asleep, waking once to remember that he had failed to read the local weekly today. He had

wanted to see what the new J-School graduate had said in his column.

The story I have just written about Bob is not quite true, but it might be true. The only arranging I have done is simply a matter of huddling all of these events into a single day.

I CANNOT RECALL when I first became aware of the University of Missouri. My earliest memories include the county extension agent and extension bulletins on every subject from shade trees to tomato beetles, Korean lespedeza to terraces. I believe that we are rarely reminded of the diversity and complexity and force for good that the University of Missouri has been in the lives of all of us.

Bob is a farmer, but concern for the Missouri farmer is only one of the many concerns of the University. The lean pork we eat, the trees which shade us, the quail which live under the trees, the clothes we wear, the earth and rocks we walk on and the water under the rocks, the very air we breathe, are all within its province.

I was an Arts and Science student, not an Aggie. We left the Aggies untouched in our talk of poetry and art and philosophy. We were, in fact, expected to mention them only for humorous purposes. I could not join in this shunning, but felt it was fortunate that all schools were on the same Campus.

MY LIFE AT MU is 25 years behind me and I have time for reflection. Obviously other state universities play similar important roles in their states. And certainly other state and private educational institutions perform their functions as well as MU. Private seed and feed and machinery companies carry on expensive research and education.

The University and almost everyone who knows I am an MU graduate vastly overestimate my interest in the football Tigers. Perhaps the University of Missouri has been more successful as a vendor of knowledge than a discoverer of it.

But for me and my eight nieces and nephews, the University of Missouri at Columbia is truly our alma mater, an appropriate metaphor, and I am grateful to give her this long-delayed letter of gratitude. □

