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# From foxhole to classroom: world war II veterans at iowa state college

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From foxhole to classroom: World War II veterans at Iowa State College

by

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## INTRODUCTION

The Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, widely known as the GI Bill of Rights, stands as one of the largest pieces of social legislation ever enacted by the United States Congress. Initially criticized as wasteful and ineffective, the GI Bill forced colleges and universities to rethink their approach to education and reconsider their place in the postwar world. The generation that returned from the battlefields of Europe and Asia enrolled with their GI Bill benefits in large numbers. They became Nobel Prize winners, Supreme Court Associate Justices and President of the United States.<sup>1</sup> These individuals helped spread McCarthyism, the mass uniformity of the 1950s and deepened United States' involvement in Vietnam.

The Selective Service system inducted over sixteen million individuals during the course of the Second World War. The fate of such a large segment of the population could not be left to chance. Congress learned from the march of the Bonus Army after the First World War the consequences of isolating its war veterans and designed the GI Bill to avoid civil unrest and provide veterans with a soft place to land. Although widely recognized as a college tuition program, the GI Bill provided veterans with low interest loans to start businesses, buy a home or enter farming. Legislators, leaders in higher education and even the military itself criticized the initiative. Those who opposed the bill complained that servicemen and women had little desire to attend college or university. This was a valid concern during a period when education beyond high school was considered a luxury and

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<sup>1</sup> Leon Lederman used his GI Bill benefits to fund his graduate degree from Columbia University and won the Nobel Prize for Physics in 1988. Former U.S. President George H.W. Bush used GI Bill to partially fund his education at Yale. United States Supreme Court Justices John Paul Stevens and William Rehnquist also benefited from the GI Bill.

many military inductees had barely finished high school, or dropped out before getting their diplomas.

While policy makers considered the GI Bill, the men and women who stood to benefit also pondered their postwar future. The chief concern for many demobilized soldiers was finding work after the war. Entering the military meant leaving jobs and returning home to that same position was not all too certain. The United States economy struggled and the addition of hundreds of thousands of individuals looking for work could prove disastrous. Military training had limited civilian applications. An aircraft mechanic could find similar work as a civilian, while an infantryman could not. Providing additional education was a logical step forward, although it encountered resistance along the way. Administrators of universities and colleges were concerned that their campuses would turn into refugee camps: a quick fix for a government that felt obligated to keep veterans housed, feed and occupied. University administrators were soon proven wrong as veteran students exceeded all expectations and changed the perception most had of how soldiers would fit into academic life.

The initial results of the GI Bill were mixed. By the time the fall semester 1944 was underway veterans were not sold on the initiative to send them back to school. Veterans were not enrolling in classes, and those that did take advantage of the program were by and large individuals who left their studies for the military. At first it appeared the naysayers were correct in their assumptions and the proof was in the tepid enrollment. Demobilization took time, however, and eventually all doubts about the success of the GI Bill faded.

By fall semester 1946 swarms of veteran students arrived on American campuses and with them came unique challenges. Chief among those was that veteran students arrived at

universities more emotionally and physically mature than their non-veteran peers. As a result students abandoned many of the traditions that required paying deference to upperclassmen. In their place came the community building and leisure events still found on modern campuses. Young people were marrying in record numbers during and in the period immediately following the war signaling the start of the baby boom. Inevitably as more troops returned stateside, couples graced the lawns and buildings of college campuses as one, or both spouses enrolled using GI Bill benefits. In just a matter of weeks universities scraped together temporary housing to accommodate the special population. Although the pace the married undergraduate student population set slowed into the 1950s, their legacy continued on in modern married student housing complexes in addition to the policies and special considerations made on their behalf.

By the time Congress enacted the GI Bill, Iowa State College had established successful relationships with the US military and federal government. Army and Navy enlistees under the ASTP and V-12 programs came to Iowa State to gain the technical expertise necessary to wage two major offensives. Iowa State played a role in the development of atomic weapons when a Manhattan Project lab on campus developed a cost effective way to produce large amounts of uranium. With the GI Bill in place, the military continued to have an impact on Iowa State.

Students returned to Iowa State College in large numbers in the years immediately following the allied victories in Europe and Japan. In 1946 the total enrollment was 9,219 students, up from 3,407 students in 1945, an increase of 170%. Roughly 40% of these veterans were married. An upward trend in enrollment continued as the military demobilized

more soldiers. By fall 1947 administrators at Iowa State expected veterans would comprise sixty percent of their enrollment.

In 1998 Tom Brokaw coined the phrase, “the Greatest Generation” to describe those individuals who lived through the Great Depression and subsequently the Second World War. This led to an increased interest in the GI Bill and several books published discussing its impact on American society. Until Tom Brokaw published his collection of oral histories, two books constituted the most popular references on the subject: David R. Ross’ *Preparing for Ulysses* published in 1970 and Keith Olson’s *The GI Bill, the Veteran’s and the Colleges*. Ross’ book contained the administrative history of the bill, while the social history of the bill comprised Olson’s work. These two books established the basis for future scholarship on the subject, and Olson’s work continues as the only comprehensive discussion of the impact the GI Bill had on colleges and universities. In the style of revisionist history, several books discuss the bill’s impact on student veterans of a particular race or gender, but very few directly address the experience of married students at length. Furthermore, many reduce postwar campus social life to anecdotes and do not fully explore the relationship between postwar social expectations and postwar outcomes.

The purpose of this paper is to synthesize current scholarship on the GI Bill, while comparing the experiences of students at Iowa State College to the opinions regarding predicted behavior held by experts and social commentators. The large married student population at Iowa State provides an opportunity to study the experiences of this special population with more detail. Although returning veterans posed unique problems to college administrators, they exceeded all expectations in regards to academic achievement and readjustment into civilian life.

## The Creation of the GI Bill

The Serviceman's Readjustment Act of 1944, the official, although less charming name given to what is popularly known as the GI Bill of Rights, or GI Bill, is perhaps one of the best known pieces of social legislation Congress passed. Intended to stabilize the United States as it transitioned from years of depression, rationing, and war time manufacturing to economic health and political stability, the GI Bill provided loans for veterans to buy homes, start businesses or invest in farming. The most well known provision, however, was the education benefits the bill provided. Many of the contributors to the final bill did not intend for Uncle Sam to pay for a veteran to start a new degree program. Instead, the legislation entitled veterans to one year of schooling so that they could complete unfinished. The government would cover additional years of schooling based on the number of days a veteran spent on active duty. In addition to tuition, a student received a stipend to cover books and supplies as well as an allowance for room and board. The Veterans Administration managed these funds and took responsibility for distributing the appropriate amount to the veteran and his or her school. The story behind the GI Bill is long, and although it intersects one of the most romanticized periods in United States history it demonstrates one of most haunting problems any modern democracy experienced: what is the proper course of action to care for the men and women required to protect it?<sup>2</sup>

Prior to the Second World War, despite all its best efforts, the United States' government proved ineffective at providing proper care to its war veterans. In October 1917

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<sup>2</sup> Keith Olson, *The GI Bill, the Veterans, and the Colleges*, (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1974), 4. David Ross, *Preparing for Ulysses: Politics and Veterans During World War II*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969), 3.

Congress passed Public Law 90, the War Risk Insurance Act. This bill provided life insurance, underwritten by the federal treasury, to members of the armed forces with a maximum coverage amount of \$10,000. Many private life insurance companies refused to insure members of the armed forces, and many found that the life insurance they carried as civilians included war time clauses which negated the coverage. To veterans who returned stateside disabled, the government promised vocational training. The able-bodied veteran, upon discharge, received \$60 for a train ticket home, hardly enough to cover transportation costs if home happened to be far from his post.<sup>3</sup> The homecoming many soldiers sought while in the trenches was not waiting for them on the other side of the Atlantic. GIs returned to discover that their civilian employers had replaced them, a perfectly legal circumstance in 1919. This gave the veteran little choice but to take his fight from the battlefield to city hall.

President Woodrow Wilson failed to act on legislation for veterans and the laws Congress passed appeared as an afterthought, created months after the war officially ended. The red tape and delays disabled veterans faced while filing claims, to either the Bureau of War Risk Insurance or the Federal Board for Vocational Education, caused endless discouragement. Veterans' organizations that formed during the United States involvement in the war stepped in where government agencies and representatives largely failed. In 1919, the American Legion took upon itself the task of promoting legislation that extended greater benefits to able bodied veterans. The Bonus Bill the American Legion backed presented servicemen with cash bounties depending upon the duration and rigor of their service.<sup>4</sup> Persistent legionnaires saw to it that Congress debated a bill in 1922 that provided veterans

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<sup>3</sup> Kathleen Frydell, *The GI Bill*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 47; Ross, 29.

<sup>4</sup> Ross, 13.

with bonus certificates with values based on the number of days spent in active service. Although these certificates matured in 1945, veterans could borrow up to 22.5% of the certificate's value after two years.<sup>5</sup> Both houses passed this measure, but President Warren Harding vetoed the bill after declaring it excessive. The American Legion continued to pressure Congress to pass the Bonus Bill, but it had to wait two years before succeeding. In 1924, both houses passed the Bonus Bill again only to be met by another veto, this time from President Calvin Coolidge.<sup>6</sup> The Senate overrode the presidential veto and the bill became law, but this far from placated the veterans and organizations that represented them.

The onset of the Great Depression reached far and wide. Thousands were out of work including First World War. The image of the war veteran selling fruit on the corner entered popular memory. Finding themselves short on funds, veterans attempted to redeem their bonuses early and petitioned Congress to allow loans of up to 50% of the value of their bonus certificates. President Herbert Hoover vetoed this measure, and riding a wave of patriotism, Congress overrode his decision. Still veterans demanded more and began calling for immediate payment of their bonus certificates, leading to the now infamous Bonus March on Washington in summer 1932. Veterans being forced out of Washington by the regular Army sent a clear message to Congress that Americans took the well being of discharged servicemen seriously. More attempts to amend the Bonus Bill followed, as did presidential vetoes. By the time the wrangling over the Bonus Bill ended, the United States Treasury

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<sup>5</sup> William Pyrlle Dillingham, *Federal Aid to Veterans, 1917-1941* (Gainesville, Fla., 1952): quoted in Ross, 15.

<sup>6</sup> Treasury secretary Mellon suggested the veto for the same reasons he gave Harding: excessive spending and unlikely to strengthen the economy.

expended \$3.8 billion on veterans and another war appeared on the horizon. A precedent had been set, and now future veterans would expect better treatment.<sup>7</sup>

Washington learned many lessons from working with the doughboys of the First World War. Most important, veterans required assurance from the people sending them to fight that the economy would have a place for them upon their return. Americans held memories of unemployed veterans in the United States and witnessed the rise of fascism in Europe at the hands of organized, unemployed veterans. As the Second World War continued, the number of future veterans increased and as a result so did the number of potentially unemployed veterans, a situation which frightened Americans.<sup>8</sup> Congress passed the Selective Service Act of 1940, which included provisions allowing veterans to return to their civilian jobs, the direct result of a lesson learned from the demobilization after the First World War. America's Second World War veterans demanded better treatment than their predecessors, and many began seeing the potential for a mutually beneficial relationship between veterans, the government, and the economy.

President Franklin Roosevelt formed the National Resource Planning Board as part of New Deal legislation to initiate public works relief projects, and in 1942 this board recommended forming a committee to evaluate postwar economic goals and veteran demobilization. Roosevelt agreed, but only after deciding that such a committee would be informal and its findings unpublicized. Such a committee, Roosevelt argued, would divert people's attention from winning the war.<sup>9</sup> On the surface Roosevelt's actions seem well intended, but they were anything but clear cut. Roosevelt served as Assistant Secretary of the

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<sup>7</sup> Ross, 20.

<sup>8</sup> Olson, 4.

<sup>9</sup> Olson, 5.

Navy from 1913 to 1920 and often remarked about the lack of planning for veterans of the First World War and wanted to avoid repeating the mistakes of that era.<sup>10</sup> However, during his first term as President, Roosevelt opposed benefits, stating “no person, because he wore a uniform, must thereafter be placed in a special class of beneficiaries over and above all other citizens.”<sup>11</sup> He signed legislation which reduced benefits, and declared that veterans were citizens first and veterans second. It was only at the insistence of his uncle, and NRPB Chairman, Frederic Delano, that Roosevelt consented to forming a committee to explore postwar issues, and only after Delano suggested it would boost morale.<sup>12</sup>

Delano hand-selected members of the committee that became the Conference on Post-war Readjustment of Civilian and Military Personnel which met twenty-seven times between July 1942 and April 1943. In June 1943, Delano’s committee released its report outlining its predictions for postwar life. The committee’s remarks resembled platitudes more than concrete suggestions. For example, one proposal suggested federal and state governments work together to alleviate potential problems. However, at its core the report dealt with education and training’s relationship to employment opportunities.<sup>13</sup>

The education plans the committee proposed included scholarships for areas of study in high demand. The scholarships would pay tuition, but provided little living expense to attract only the most serious veterans. Scholarships also supported vocational education, but only for those occupations with an increasing demand for workers. The report did not move

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>11</sup> Frydl, 53.

<sup>12</sup> Olson, 5.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 8.

the president to action. The NRPB released its final report to Congress in March 1943 and Roosevelt felt the work of Delano's committee mimicked the proposals written there.<sup>14</sup>

As Roosevelt often did, he played one committee off another to incorporate different perspectives in his decision making. Early in 1942, discouraged by the slow progress of the Conference on Post-war Readjustment, Roosevelt formed the Armed Forces Committee on Post-war Educational Opportunities for Service Personnel and selected Brigadier General Frederick Osborn as chair. Unlike Delano's committee, Osborn's committee remained completely focused on education benefits for veterans. The Osborn Committee released its report in July 1943, one month after Delano's. Both committees reached similar conclusions, with the most significant difference being that Osborn's committee suggested specific dollar amounts for living stipends instead of the purposefully vague language used to deter potential freeloaders.<sup>15</sup> Shortly before Osborn's committee released its report, Roosevelt announced to the nation in a fireside chat his desire for a comprehensive plan for veteran benefits. In a reversal of previous attitudes on the subject, he stated that veterans "must not be demobilized into an environment of inflation and unemployment, to a place on the bread line or on a corner selling apples."<sup>16</sup>

The president's change of heart was both political and practical. Previously, on November 13, 1942, Roosevelt signed amendments to the Selective Service Act (SSA) lowering the conscription age to eighteen. Roosevelt acknowledged that the SSA would interrupt education plans for many, and promising benefits to veterans served as a way to appease voters uneasy about drafting teenagers. The other side of the coin, to which he

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>16</sup> Samuel J. Rosenman, ed. *The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1950): 1943 volume, pp. 333-35 quoted in Olson, 12.

alluded in his 1943 fireside chat, was the practicality of the government sponsoring a highly educated and trained workforce. Not only would such a workforce provide the United States with economic supremacy, the time veterans spent in the classroom meant less time spent in the unemployment line, or marching on Washington. The plan seemed foolproof; however, it suffered from a major problem: no one in the administration nor anyone in Congress would take up the task of shepherding such legislation.<sup>17</sup>

Effective August 1943, Congress stopped funding the NRPB, ending that organization's influence on veterans' benefits. Representatives in Congress introduced several bills relating to veterans' benefits, but many of these languished in committees. With an election year fast approaching, Roosevelt took it upon himself to suggest legislation to Congress and sent a list of the best measures from the Delano report, in addition to his own provisions to Congress. On November 3, 1943, Utah Senator Elbert Thomas introduced a bill to the Senate that included the report of General Osborn's committee as well as the suggestions Roosevelt made. Thomas's Committee on Education and Labor held hearings on the proposed bill for two days in December 1943 and the bill reached the floor of the Senate on February 7, 1944.<sup>18</sup>

Before the Senate could debate Thomas's bill, the American Legion released to the press its omnibus bill for veterans' benefits. In the fall of 1943, the American Legion, motivated by inaction in Congress, began drafting legislation that included medical care, unemployment compensation, education and vocational training, as well as home and farm loans for veterans.<sup>19</sup> The American Legion dubbed this plan the GI Bill of Rights.

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<sup>17</sup> Ross, 72.

<sup>18</sup> Ross, 96.

<sup>19</sup> Olson, 15.

It did not take long for members of the House to act on the proposed bill. Just days after reconvening from Christmas recess, Representative John Rankin introduced the GI Bill in the House. Senator Joel Clark followed suit the next day. Between January and March the Senate Finance Committee held hearings on the Clark bill. In March, Clark introduced a new bill which also contained features of the Thomas legislation. Slight differences existed between the Thomas bill and the one written by the American Legion. Under the Thomas bill, the Office of Education would direct education programs, while the American Legion preferred the Veterans' Administration. The Legion bill limited benefits to veterans for whom the war interrupted their education, while the Thomas bill entitled veterans to at least one year of full tuition and fees. The full Senate did not spend too much time debating fine points of the legislation and seemed satisfied enough with Clark's second bill that, on March 18, only half of the body even showed up to vote.<sup>20</sup>

By the time the Senate bill moved to the House, the Committee on World War II Veterans' Legislation finished hearings on the Legion bill introduced in January. Chairman of the Committee, John Rankin, began additional hearings on the Senate bill, amended it, and sent it to the House, where it passed on May 18 without a dissenting vote.<sup>21</sup> The United States inched its way toward reversing years of flawed policy and ensuring the veterans of The Second World War would not suffer the same fate as the doughboys of the previous generation. The GI Bill crossed its final hurdle on June 12, 1944, when a joint committee presented a final bill to the floor of their respective chambers. An affirmative vote from both sides soon followed and FDR signed the bill into law on June 22, 1944.

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<sup>20</sup> Olson, 16.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 17.

The portion of the bill pertaining to education, Title II, changed as it worked its way through congressional committees. In the end, veterans who wished to continue their education, or begin anew, received an unequivocal deal. The number of years for which government would provide tuition depended on time spent in service, with all veterans who served more than six months in the military receiving at least one year. The bill limited the number of years for which a member of the armed services could receive tuition benefits to four years. Veterans twenty five years of age or older needed to prove that the war precluded completion of their degree program. The Veterans Administration oversaw education benefits, determined a veteran's eligibility and parsed out \$500 to cover books and supplies and an additional monthly living allowance. Veterans could select any accredited school, including private institutions, providing they could meet the admission requirements. The VA allowed matriculation at technical and vocational schools as well as in correspondence courses.<sup>22</sup>

The American Legion provided the catalyst for comprehensive veterans' legislation in the 1940s. Although this era is typified as a period of cooperation and common values, the creation of the GI Bill provided evidence to the contrary. The romanticized memory of the period gives the GI Bill iconic status, bordering on sainthood.<sup>23</sup> As always, it is important to place historical decisions in their proper context, as Keith Olson explained, "at its root, the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 was more an antidepression measure than an expression of gratitude to veterans."<sup>24</sup> American citizens feared the impact millions of

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<sup>22</sup> Mark Van Ells, *To Hear Only Thunder Again*, (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2001):30-31.

<sup>23</sup> Frydl, 1.

<sup>24</sup> Olson, 24.

discharged GIs would have on postwar life if something were not done to ease their transition.

Many are equally surprised to learn that such a successful piece of legislation originated in reluctantly formed commissions and committees and found its greatest champion in the lobbyist at the American Legion who insisted Congress act. President Roosevelt, the champion of the New Deal and its social welfare policies, opposed veteran benefits on the principle that the government was no more obligated to servicemen and women than civilian citizens. Veterans legislation provided Roosevelt with political goodwill, and it is interesting that some of his staunchest opponents in Congress, John Rankin, for one, took a personal interest in seeing such legislation materialize.<sup>25</sup> Despite its somewhat paradoxical past, the GI Bill remains one of the most recognized pieces of legislation passed by Congress. It also provided the seed for countless more innovations regarding veterans' benefits.

Title II of the Servicemen's Readjustment Act, also known as Public Law 346, is the most well known and easily recognized benefit extended to members of the armed forces. An equally generous law, the Veterans' Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1943, known as Public Law 16, provided education and training to veterans of the Second World War who returned stateside with a recognized disability. Like Public Law 346, the Rehabilitation Act served to "enhance the employment options of disabled veterans through educational opportunities."<sup>26</sup> Honorably discharged veterans, who could prove they required additional education or training to overcome their disability, qualified for four years of education regardless of the

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<sup>25</sup> Ross, 43.

<sup>26</sup> Van Ells, 137.

number of years spent in the military.<sup>27</sup> Veterans taking advantage of Public Law 16 benefits studied alongside Public Law 346 benefactors and made equal contributions to campus life.

Passage of these laws represented the effort of many education experts, legislators, military organizations, and service members who worked tirelessly to ensure the creation of a comprehensive veterans' policy. State governments also formed committees to explore the consequences of demobilization for their local economies. As with the National Resource Planning Board and similar organizations, members of the Iowa Post-War Rehabilitation Commission considered the best way to educate, house, and employ citizens of a postwar Iowa. The Iowa Post-War Rehabilitation Commission's Committee on Education released its report to Governor Bourke Hickenlooper on September 15, 1944. University of Iowa President, Virgil Hancher, acted as chair while Iowa State College President Charles Friley and four others made up the committee that addressed a wide range of topics from high school and vocational education to adult and higher education.<sup>28</sup> Released only three months after Congress passed the GI Bill, the report reflected the attitude man held that returning servicemen and women would not take immediate advantage of their right to a subsidized education.

The report remained undecided about the impact the GI Bill would have on enrollment. The report suggested the deluge of students that appeared on the doorsteps of campuses in the fall 1945 would come as a surprise. One of the concerns listed in the committee's report was how many out-of-state students colleges and universities could expect after the war. The committee concluded in its report that that a "considerable change

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid, 137.

<sup>28</sup> Iowa Post-War Rehabilitation Commission, *Report of the Committee of Education*, September 15, 1944, Charles Friley Papers, Special Collections, Parks Library, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa.

in [out of state student enrollment] as a result of veterans returning to colleges and universities is conjectural.” The report went on to note that “it seems probable that we may expect a larger number of out-of-state students...as a result of the G.I. Bill.”<sup>29</sup> Committee members did not realize that, in a few short months, they would draft admissions policies that limited the number of out of state students their institutions would accept. This came about, not as a result of an increased demand from non residents, but from the previously unsurpassed desire by resident students to enroll and the inability of their respective institutions to house them all.

The speed at which students returned to their educations or began their degree programs was unclear to committee members. When the committee released its report in the fall of 1944, no one in higher education knew that The Second World War was in its last year. The committee successfully predicted that enrollment would be at its peak four to five years after the war’s conclusion.<sup>30</sup> Members also determined that the success of their institutions rested in the ability to update facilities in time to accommodate an increase in students. Not only did classrooms and labs require updating, but faculty and staff that remained mobilized would need to be replaced. Unfortunately, the war also shrank the pool of qualified graduate students to teach entry level courses. Rationing also reduced the availability of building supplies and thus postponed any serious additions or needed repairs.

If government agencies expected a poor showing for veterans participating in education benefits, it was because the veterans themselves did not show immediate

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<sup>29</sup> Iowa Post-War Rehabilitation Commission, *Report of the Committee of Education*, September 15, 1944, Charles Friley Papers, Special Collections, Parks Library, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 8. Postwar enrollment in higher education institutions peaked in 1949 at 2,444,900 students nationwide, a 68% increase from 1945, as reported in Keith W. Olson, *The GI Bill, the Veterans, and the Colleges*, (Lexington: the University Press of Kentucky, 1974): 44.

enthusiasm for the idea. The Army, as well as colleges and universities, conducted surveys of mobilized soldiers to gauge their postwar intentions. The Research Branch of the Information and Education Division of the War Department surveyed mobilized troops on a variety of topics ranging from their opinions of French civilians to their postwar plans. Academics at Princeton University compiled and analyzed the statistics to produce the multi-volume work *The American Soldier*. When asked about their post-separation plans, only eight percent of the 27,000 enlisted and commissioned soldiers responded that they planned to enroll in school full-time.<sup>31</sup> This number proved to be higher for officers, however, as Army regulations by and large required some college or technical education to achieve a commissioned rank. This number seemed to reflect students wishing to return to finish a degree program or enroll in professional schools. Another factor was the timeliness of the survey. Roosevelt signed the GI Bill only weeks after Allied invasion of Normandy. Given the precedence Operation Overlord took in news headlines and the inability of front line soldiers to place their hands on fresh newsprint, it is understandable that many soldiers either did not know about the passage of GI Bill at the time the War Department conducted the survey, or they did not fully understand their entitlements.

Even after sufficient time passed, allowing news of the bill to circulate in post newspapers and military periodicals, members of the armed forces approached news out of Washington with caution and skepticism. An article published by W.M. Kiplinger on June 8, 1945, in the *Kiplinger Washington Letter*, recorded the views soldiers expressed on veterans' benefits. More than one soldier expressed belief that the GI Bill amounted to a political stunt

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<sup>31</sup> Samuel A. Stouffer, et al., *The American Soldier: Combat and Its Aftermath*, Vol. II. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1949), 602.

above anything else. According to Kiplinger, “GI benefits are taken by some with a grain of salt. ‘These benefits don’t kid me any. The politicians had to vote them...’”<sup>32</sup> Others expressed disinterest in seeking advanced education. Kiplinger noted that of those who expressed an interest in returning to school, most desired to seek degrees in engineering while others “‘don’t want any more of that stuffy education.’”<sup>33</sup> As a newspaper editor, Kiplinger undoubtedly took the liberty of selecting the letters that matched the message he wished to convey. However, the sentiment he soldiers expressed in his article appeared in other publications.

In a 1945 *Saturday Evening Post* article entitled “G.I.’s Reject Education,” contributor Stanley Frank described the Serviceman’s Readjustment Act as a “splendid bill” but said it had “one conspicuous drawback. The guys aren’t buying it.”<sup>34</sup> The various surveys and reports the news media provided implied that higher education would only see a slight increase in new student enrollment as a result of the education benefits provided by the GI Bill. Colleges and universities needed to consider another segment of the student population, those students for whom the war interrupted their education. They had one foot in the foxhole and the other in the classroom and their experience at both allowed them to provide much needed information to institutes of higher education.

The University of Illinois undertook the onerous task of sending surveys to deployed students so that its campus could prepare for veteran students. In the summer of 1944, the President of the University of Illinois, Arthur Willard, sent 16,500 surveys to students mobilized both stateside and abroad. The survey contained questions regarding accelerated

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<sup>32</sup> W.M. Kiplinger, “What the Servicemen Are Thinking,” *Kiplinger Agency*, June 8, 1945. Charles Friley Papers, Special Collections, Parks Library, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> Stanley Frank, “G.I.’s Reject Education,” *Saturday Evening Post*, August 18, 1945, 20.

classes, intended courses of study, and the expectations of married students. The survey also contained space for comments regarding how the University of Illinois might better serve its students. President Willard received seven thousand responses and tabulated four thousand for use in a report sent to Midwestern colleges and universities. Of the four thousand tabulated responses, seventy two percent expressed an interest in returning to their degree programs upon demobilization.<sup>35</sup>

How the postwar economic situation might challenge conventional education interested administrators of colleges and universities. Many concluded that veterans who received military training in engineering or a similar vocation might find completing the prerequisites necessary for an academic degree superfluous given the workforce's need for skilled labor. The University of Illinois survey attempted to gauge the possibility of that attitude by including questions about accelerated programs and classes in its survey. The results slightly favored accelerated classes, which can be contributed to a desire by veterans to establish their civilian lives as quickly as possible.<sup>36</sup> The results also indicated that veterans wished to participate in the engineering curriculum in large numbers. The demand for skilled labor in the postwar economy persuaded many soldiers to supplement their military training and pursue engineering courses upon returning stateside.

The responses recorded in the surveys the War Department and educators conducted painted a picture of the returning veterans as dedicated, goal oriented individuals. Despite these initial positive responses, veterans still had to prove themselves worthy of engaging in academic work. Education administrators feared the GI Bill for almost the exact reason the

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<sup>35</sup> Jessie Howard, Summary of Replies to the Questionnaire Sent to Illini in Service, August 1944, December 28, 1944, Charles Friley Papers, Special Collections, Parks Library, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

government enacted it: as a tool to prevent massive unemployment causing campuses to become, in the words of University of Chicago president Robert M. Hutchins, “educational hobo jungles.”<sup>37</sup> The idea of government-provided higher education for the masses made academic elitist more than uncomfortable. An article appearing in *Time* magazine in 1946 asked “Why go to Podunk U When the Government Will Send You to Yale?”<sup>38</sup> Anecdotal stories circulated of returning veterans who wrote to admissions programs at prestigious institutions to inquire about their plumbing and carpentry programs. Higher education had long been a white, Protestant, middle class establishment and the passage of the GI Bill would reshape this image. Despite the apprehension college administrators felt, veterans proved to be students worthy of their degrees.

When Congress passed the GI Bill it reversed years of inadequate veterans policy. Soldiers returning home after their service in The Second World War received more than train fare, but instead received a ticket to better opportunities. Men and women demobilized, sure of the options that lay ahead of them, and attempted to pick up where they left off: to sweethearts, jobs, farms and the college campus. As veterans began to flood college campuses nationwide in 1945 and 1946 they immediately made their mark on higher education and developed a rich legacy inherited by anyone who attended a college or university in the latter part of the 20th century and beyond.

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<sup>37</sup> Robert M. Hutchins, “The Threat to American Education,” *Collier’s*, December 30, 1944, 20-21.

<sup>38</sup> “Education: S.R.O.,” *Time*, March 18, 1946.

### **Educational Hobo Jungles**

In the years immediately following allied victories in Europe and Japan, students returned to Iowa State College in large numbers. Almost immediately after the United States Congress passed the Serviceman's Readjustment Act of 1944, colleges and universities anticipated their arrival and began making predictions about how these soldiers-come-students changed the social fabric of their campuses. Articles published by leading higher education journals at the time predicted the returning students would show a high level of maturity and become diligent students, almost unwilling to pursue any sort of pleasure outside of the classroom. A great number of these students returned to their studies accompanied by their spouse. Although returning GIs posed unique problems for Iowa State College administrators, and inward retreat from typical college life did not mark their return from the war.

Perhaps the most repeated theme in post-war higher education literature was the expression that returning veterans would expect to be treated as men. An article published in the *Journal of Higher Education* in late 1944 stated that "the veterans went away from us as boys; they return to us as men. They will want us to treat them like men; talk with them, not at them, in a straightforward manner; they will be in a hurry."<sup>39</sup> Major S.H. Kraines, perhaps an expert on military life, but no psychic, predicted in 1945 that "the larger group of veteran students will be more serious and definite in intent, will be concerned with the essential values of higher education, and will be relatively unimpressed by or interested in the

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<sup>39</sup> Charles H. Titus, "The University and the New Veteran," *Journal of Higher Education* 15, no. 2 (Feb., 1946): 73.

superficialities of college life.”<sup>40</sup> He went on to write that “Social activity will, in most instances, be entered into spontaneously; but many men, especially those who have served overseas and in posts distant from civilization, will be diffident or even antagonistic about making social adjustments.”<sup>41</sup> In other words, veterans would be stoic beings, whose experience in the military had made them too mature and too experienced in the ways of the world to be concerned with the petty affairs of student organizations and social events.

Pundits based their opinions on veteran readjustment on the experience members of the First World War generation had in rejoining the civilian ranks. In his 1944 book *The Veteran Comes Back*, Willard Waller predicted that hardened veterans would return to the United States with acrimonious attitudes toward civilian life. Waller opined that any educational institution would provide “the best possible bridge from the army to civil life.” According to Waller, education provided the straightest path to rehabilitation under a “light yoke.” The campus provided the discharged veteran with the ideal environment to work out “his emotional readjustments.” Waller held a poor opinion of higher education, an opinion that rivaled his misinformed beliefs about future veterans.<sup>42</sup>

Prescriptions for discharged veterans ranged from the well intended, but mildly amusing, opinions of experts like Major Kraines to misguided and insulting opinions of Willard Waller. Waller predicted that veterans would not perform academically and had in fact lost interest in their studies before enlisting. Keeping in the spirit of detached veterans, Waller observed that discharged GIs were “shockingly uninformed on political affairs.”<sup>43</sup> If

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<sup>40</sup> S.H. Kraines, “The Veteran and Postwar Education,” *The Journal of Higher Education* 16, no. 6 (Jun., 1945): 290.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 295.

<sup>42</sup> Willard Waller, *The Veteran Comes Back* (New York: Dryden Press, 1944), 151-153.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 152.

veterans did not satisfy Waller's standards for maintaining an informed view of international headlines it was not because they did not have a newfound interest in global politics. Many colleges noted that enrollment in history, geography and political science classes increased after the war.<sup>44</sup>

In his 1947 doctoral thesis, Iowa State College student Arthur M. Gowan surveyed 309 students, both veterans and non-veterans. Gowan reported that of the 82 veterans he surveyed, 90% felt confident about what type of work they wanted to study upon enrolling, compared to 64% for non-veterans.<sup>45</sup> The determination veterans expressed translated into higher grade point averages. As Gowan's thesis demonstrated, veterans averaged a GPA of 2.235 points higher than their non veteran counterparts. This statistical advantage remained constant regardless of the student's academic program. Over the course of the remaining two quarters, the grade point average increased for both veterans and non-veterans alike, with veterans maintaining their academic superiority. At the end of the 1945-1946 school year, veterans held a grade point average of 2.282 compared to 2.088 for non-veterans. Evidence existed to suggest veterans received higher marks as a result of their military service. When compared to veterans, non-veterans had higher high school grade point averages and achieved higher scores on standardized tests. The academic related data reported at the end of the 1946 school year proved any theories on academic maladjustment insignificant. Veterans maintained higher averages and had a lower attrition rate than their non-veteran peers.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Michael J. Bennett, *When Dreams Came True: The GI Bill and the Making of Modern America* (Washington, D.C.: Brassey's Press, 2000), 239. An often repeated story in literature on the subject of the GI Bill tells of a student who challenged a fact presented by his professor, exclaiming, "Don't tell me about China, I've *been* to China."

<sup>45</sup> Arthur M. Gowan, "Unique Characteristics of Freshman Veterans at the Iowa State College, with Administrative Implications" (doctoral thesis, Iowa State, 1947), 41.

<sup>46</sup> Gowan, 41.

Observations by such pundits as Willard Waller proved to be largely incorrect and decreased in influence as returning veterans began proving his predictions wrong, one by one. Veterans were consistently the highest achievers on the postwar campus in terms of grade point average. Disabled and married veterans outscored their civilian counterparts and received praise from professors for their diligence.<sup>47</sup> The efforts of Waller and others were not without merit. No one wanted to repeat the catastrophe of First World War's Lost Generation; as a result experts expended a lot of energy into predicting postwar life.

The State of Iowa prepared for the war's aftermath by forming the Post-War Rehabilitation Commission. This organization tended to focus on Iowa's infrastructural needs, but kept tally of social statistics as well. Many universities conducted their own post war surveys and shared their results with their peer institutions. The opinions expressed in these surveys ran counter to the ideas of men such as Major Kraines. A survey of University of Illinois students for whom military service interrupted their college careers revealed that students wanted "more intramural sports, cultural events and fair play in campus politics" upon their return.<sup>48</sup> A similar survey conducted by the University of Nebraska revealed that more spaces for social events interested students. Many comments from returning students suggested more "all-University social functions, a bigger and better athletic program, greater opportunities for social contacts with the faculty."<sup>49</sup> When reading these reports one has to take into consideration that the data therein was collected from students who already

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<sup>47</sup> Leonard Bengtson, "Entrance Age and Achievement of Disabled Veterans at Iowa State College" (master's thesis, Iowa State College, 1956). Notes from the meeting of the Committee of Thirteen, May 5, 1947. Charles Friley Papers, Special Collections, Parks Library, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa.

<sup>48</sup> Jesse Howard to University Administrators, December 28, 1944, Charles Friley Papers, Iowa State University Library, Ames, Iowa.

<sup>49</sup> W.C. Toepelman to University Administrators, Charles Friley Papers, Iowa State University Library, Ames, Iowa.

participated in at least one year at a university or college. Therefore, one cannot directly attribute their answers to participation in the war. Yet, that does not mean they were not as significant. The University of Nebraska poll conducted on “1711 men and women who had left school for military and naval service prior to graduation” indicated that military experience did not create recluses, but instead catalyzed many to partake in campus activities.<sup>50</sup> The experience at Iowa State College between the years of 1945-1947 reflected the trend toward extracurricular involvement indicated by the University of Nebraska and University of Illinois polls.

Discharged GIs were not only becoming involved in campus activities, they were also becoming the leaders of those organizations. In an article published in *The Journal of Higher Education* entitled “When the G.I. Goes to College” John Grinnell stated that “colleges and universities should be prepared for an increasing number of GIs taking on leadership roles and also be conscious of students desiring more say in the administration of student life.” John Grinnell, the author of the aforementioned article, stated that “the veterans will assume leadership on the campus. Moreover, the leadership will be democratic.” Grinnell expected the veterans to enact a revolution in campus politics, acknowledging “they will purge our colleges- if we give them half the chance- of picayune intolerances and undemocratic student practices.”<sup>51</sup> For returning veterans safety came in numbers, and veterans used this as a voting block to enact change on campus. Traditional veterans organizations such as the Veterans of Foreign Wars and the American Veterans Council recruited members from Iowa State’s student population. The veterans organizations on campus had a narrower scope,

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid

<sup>51</sup> John Erle Grinnell, “When the GI Goes to College,” *The Journal of Higher Education* 17, no. 5 (May, 1946): 245.

catering to the college student. Married students joined in on campus activities, although largely within the context of the family. Previously established organizations tailored their programs to meet the needs of this population, and when organizations did not exist to fulfill these needs students created new ones.

In the fall and winter of 1946 students expressed concern that Iowa State was experiencing a decline in the number of participants in extracurricular activities. In an *Iowa State Daily Student* article, Royce Hilliard, a freshman studying Agriculture and a veteran, stated that his fellow students were forgetting that a large number of those enrolled that year were former servicemen. Hilliard stated that veterans had “been doing a job that had to be done....during this time our minds have been occupied with more serious things.” His remarks sounded strikingly similar to the education experts of the day. Hilliard made a correlation between the difficulties veterans were experiencing in the classroom and a decline in participation. According to Hilliard, “we can’t carry our full load of courses and engage in all the extra-curricular activities that you find at Iowa State.”<sup>52</sup>

The editor of the editorial section was not going to let Hilliard get the last word. The editor made three interesting points in a list that followed Hilliard’s editorial. The first of these was that veterans enrolled at Iowa State were making better grades than civilian students. He also pointed out that the majority of the student leadership positions on campus were being filled by veterans. To further clarify his point he mentioned that the editor of the *Daily Student* as well as the author of the editorials section were veterans.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Editorial, “‘Get Hep to Situation,’ Veteran Tells Daily Student,” *Iowa State Daily Student*, Feb. 8, 1946

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

But Hilliard was not the only one commenting on the inability to balance social life and school work. A student who identified himself as “a bewildered freshman” expressed that “since coming here I’ve been asked to join the YMCA, Yel Jax, 630 Club, dance class, bridge class and many other functions.” All of these organizations presented opportunities but also frustration for the freshman who stated that he stood in line at the Veterans Administration on registration days and at the bookstore to purchase the supplies guaranteed to him by his benefits. From class registration to extracurricular activities, college life seemed to overwhelm veterans such as Hilliard. In a tone different very much different than Hilliard, the perplexed student wrote that “the only reason I’ve stayed around this long is because I just wanted to know what was going to happen next.”<sup>54</sup> The experience of students at Iowa State during this time tended to be like the bewildered freshman, in that the post-war social life at Iowa State College presented a lot of opportunities for involvement.

Discharged GIs not only held positions at the *Daily Student* but also contributed to the student run magazine, *The Green Gander*. Before being drafted in 1941, Tom Swearingen was editor of the *Gander*, the college’s humor magazine. He served with the 14th Air Force in the China-India-Burma theatre. He returned to Iowa State in 1946 and resumed his position as editor in the spring. In addition to his duties as an editor, Swearingen was also a member of a national professional men’s journalism society as well as a member of the Student Union Board.<sup>55</sup>

Another icon of Iowa State, VEISHEA, stayed afloat in the post war years through the participation of former GIs. In 1947 the publicity chairman of the event was a veteran of

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<sup>54</sup> Editorial, “Freshman Deplores life’s Difficulties,” *Iowa State Daily Student*, November 3, 1947.

<sup>55</sup> “Announce Heads For Green Gander,” *Iowa State Daily Student*, April 6, 1946.

the Army Air Corps who served as a member of the VEISHA Opening Ceremonies committee as well as on the Central Committee for the Homecoming in 1946. The head of the 1947 VEISHEA Dance Committee was a Navy veteran named Alex Edwards. While serving as a leader for VEISHEA, Edwards was also serving as general chairman of the 1947 Science “Wintermezzo.”<sup>56</sup>

Residence hall life also provided opportunities for leadership. The two nominees for Friley Hall president in 1947 were both discharged veterans. Bernard Kozik was not only running for hall president that year, but he served as president of the Agriculture Economics Club, program chairman of Alpha Zeta and as a resident advisor in Friley. Kozik’s opponent, Clair Cook, spent four and a half years in the army and served as a resident advisor at the time of his nomination.<sup>57</sup>

The 1946 election for student body president also highlighted the involvement of veterans. At that time the Government of the Student Body was known as the Cardinal Guild. Guild members belonged to one of two political parties, the Independents or the Representatives. The Independent platform that year addressed six issues, two of which had a direct impact on former GIs. The first of these was to allow direct representation on the Cardinal Guild from Pammel Court, a new community and thus a new district of voters. The second called for special provisions allowing for the wives of Iowa State students to accompany their husbands to college functions requiring proof of enrollment. This platform

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<sup>56</sup> “Edwards Appointed Dance Chairman for 1947 VEISHEA,” *Iowa State Daily Student*, Jan. 21, 1947.

<sup>57</sup> “Friley Hall Men to Choose Officers in Election Tonight,” *Iowa Daily Student*, Jan. 21, 1947.

reflected a desire to reach a wider constituency, and also reflected the impact returning veterans and their families had on social life at Iowa State.<sup>58</sup>

The Independent Party candidate that year, Larry Hanel, served two years in the Army and was acting VEISHEA Chairman at the time of his nomination, as well as a member of the Engineer's Council.<sup>59</sup> The Representative candidate and the eventual winner of the race was Eugene Smith. Although not a veteran, his list of activities was just as impressive as Hanel's. During his campaign Smith was also serving as president of the YMCA, secretary of the American Society of Agricultural Engineers student branch as well as maintain an active role in the Collegiate Presbyterian Church. That particular election brought 2,796 Iowa State students to the polls, the largest number in school history to that point. The prediction that veterans would be more interested in campus democracy proved true.<sup>60</sup>

Apart from campus politics, GIs found a voice in the many veterans organizations operating on campus. By the summer of 1946 five such organizations had a presence on campus: the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the Iowa State Veterans Organization, the American Veterans Committee as well as organizations exclusive to Friley Hall and Pammel Court. The Iowa State Veterans Organization had a membership of over 1,000 World War One and World War Two veterans. These five organizations represented the roughly three thousand

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<sup>58</sup> "Ballot for all College Election," *Iowa State Daily Student*, April 23, 1946.

<sup>59</sup> Vincent Nielsen, "Lauds Hanel As Man For President; Believes Platform Can Be Achieved," *Iowa Daily Student*, April 24, 1946.

<sup>60</sup> "Smith Wins Election; Voting Total Largest In Iowa State History," *Iowa Daily Student*, April 25, 1946.

veterans at Iowa State in 1946. Of those five organizations, the most active was the American Veterans Council.<sup>61</sup>

The AVC conducted frequent polls of veterans on campus concerning living conditions and relations with the Veterans Administration. The AVC also sponsored social programs. In 1947 Dick Schweet, Social Chair of the AVC, presented a proposal to Dean Maurice Helser that would bring jazz legend Duke Ellington to perform on campus. The proceeds from the ticket sales would then be donated to the Pammel Court Nursery fund. The AVC also sponsored a fund drive to collect contributions for the World Student Service Fund. The Veterans of Foreign Wars sponsored monthly social programs for the veterans and their wives. These activities included dances, bridge parties, picnics and golf tournaments.<sup>62</sup>

Naturally, students were taking on leadership roles in these organizations. The nominees for vice commander of the Ames post of the Veterans of Foreign Wars included Iowa State freshman William Giese. Before being nominated, Giese was serving as the publicity chairman. Worth Karns, a freshman student in engineering, was re-elected commander of the Ames post in 1946. Serving with him as vice commander was Howard Schmidt, an agriculture student. Lionel-Schultz, also a freshman, served as junior vice-commander. William Martin and Daryl Mayfield, both freshmen, served as quartermaster and chaplain respectively.<sup>63</sup> Two freshmen held leadership positions in the Iowa State Veterans Organization in 1946. The nomination of freshman candidates signified an interest among

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<sup>61</sup> "Veteran Delegates to Vote Today on Council Plan," *Iowa Daily Student*, June 28, 1946. Walt Hammond, "Veterans Veto Central Council," *Iowa Daily Student*, July 2, 1946.

<sup>62</sup> Letter from Dick Schweet, Social Chair of the AVC, to Dean Helser. November 12, 1947. M.D. Helser Papers. Iowa State University Library, Ames, Iowa.; "VFW Program Saturday Fetes Veterans, Wives," *Iowa Daily Student*, April 5, 1946.

<sup>63</sup> "Veterans of Foreign Wars Elects Karns Commander," *Iowa Daily Student*, March 6, 1946. "Choose Nominees for VFW Office," *Iowa Daily Student*, March 2, 1946.

veterans in assuming leadership positions, and also indicates a strong desire for entering students to seek solidarity among fellow discharged veterans.

It did not take long before these veterans used that solidarity to force their will. A large majority of veterans at Iowa State enrolled in the engineering department. As part of that school's curriculum, senior students had to take a mandatory trip to an industrial center to observe practical engineering methods. The price of the trip had always been paid by students individually and cost each participant an average of \$75, almost an entire month's allowance under the GI Bill. Outraged, engineering students sought to remedy the situation. Their solution was simple; they would boycott the trip until the VA agreed to cover the cost in their tuition. A petition students initiated collected enough signatures that the Dean of the Division of Engineering, Lowell Stewart, regretfully cancelled the event. Students took their petition one step further and expressed their grievances in a written petition to Congress.<sup>64</sup> The law remained unchanged, but it tested the assertion made by Grinnell, that GIs would demand "more freedom in student activities" as well as "fair play for themselves and for the little man in their midst."<sup>65</sup> In this instance, the "little men" were those students who were attempting to support themselves and a family on a \$90 per month subsistence check.

Married veterans found ways to contribute to life at Iowa State. When President Friley addressed veterans during the spring of 1946, he invited any spouses of these veterans to accompany them. The importance of married students on Iowa State's campus was not only recognized by Friley, but reflected in the number of married student social programs being offered. The Representative party adopted the Independent's idea of providing a means

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<sup>64</sup> "Engineering Inspection Trip Cancelled," *Iowa Daily Student*, Jan. 25, 1947. "Engineers' Council Makes Appeal to Congress," *Iowa Daily Student*, Nov. 27, 1946.

<sup>65</sup> John Erle Grinnell, "When the GI Goes to College," *The Journal of Higher Education* 17, no. 5 (May, 1946): 245.

for wives to enjoy the benefits of social programs on campus. In 1946 the Cardinal Guild Veterans Council began issuing the Student Wife's Activity Card which allowed spouses to purchase tickets to athletic and social events on campus, such as concert and lecture series, at the same rates being offered to enrolled students. Student organizations also offered programs exclusively for couples.

Many of the students participating in on campus activities lived in Pammel or West Court. Both areas elected mayors and self governing councils. Pammel Court's council played an active role in the lives of students by establishing a fire department, successfully soliciting for bus service and planting community gardens.<sup>66</sup> West Court citizens also benefited from an active council that raised funds to build a recreation hall for "social gatherings, business meetings, general recreation purposes and a place for supervised play for children."<sup>67</sup>

The success of these organizations shows how passionate veterans at Iowa State felt about community building. Despite time spent in the armed forces, the need to socialize was present in veterans and their wives. Although many students returned to positions and activities they participated in prior to the war, their return transcended any notion that they had outpaced the maturity of their colleagues. Yet their activities reflected a certain degree of understanding that life changed as a result of the war. The AVC fundraiser for the Pammel Court nursery reflected this understanding. Wives too were becoming involved on campus. When organizations did not exist that catered to their specific needs they created them. Veteran's organizations had a large presence on campus, and their success demonstrated the

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<sup>66</sup> "Pammel Mayor Appoints 4 Men to Activate Firemen," *Iowa Daily Student*, Nov. 12, 1947; "Petition Bring Success," *Iowa Daily Student*, April 27, 1946; "Residents of Pammel Will Plant Gardens," *Iowa Daily Student*, April 2, 1946.

<sup>67</sup> "West Court Builds Recreation Hall," *Iowa Daily Student*, Aug 22, 1947.

importance discharged GIs placed on solidarity. Despite their pursuit of amusement, these college students were far from juvenile. They maintained the highest GPAs of any group of students on campus and their maturity in the classroom was the subject of praise from many professors.

One area of participation that remained unchanged after the war was athletics. Even veterans did not consider sports to be outside their interest range. Despite months and years spent in the military, returning students still wanted to participate in and watch athletic events. Married students were not exempt from the phenomenon and participated on collegiate, as well as intramural, teams.

Dorothy Dickinson, sports editor of the *Daily Student* during the fall quarter of 1945, predicted that the years immediately following the war would be “the greatest sports boom of all time.” Dickinson attributed this to technological advances the war made possible. The proliferation of air travel allowed for more intersectional events and the increasing popularity of television meant sporting events would be opened up to a much larger audience. Dickinson also pointed to returning GIs as a cause for the increased interest in athletics.<sup>68</sup>

Volleyball and softball were to become popular sports, as Dickinson explained, “The millions of GIs will come home addicts” as those two games had been “emphasized overseas” as part of physical fitness training. The absence of many athletes during the war provided an opportunity for freshmen wanting to break into the varsity ranks. The Big Six coaching association agreed to suspend regulations that forbade freshmen from playing

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<sup>68</sup> Dickinson, Dorothy. “From the Sports Desk,” *Iowa Daily Student*, Sept. 22, 1945.

varsity sports. The suspension of these regulations undoubtedly encouraged more men to try out.<sup>69</sup>

Students who participated in athletics before leaving for the war returned to the playing fields with vigor. The 1941 freshman wrestling MVP, George Rapson, was drafted into the Army during the spring of 1942. Rapson spent eighteen months in the Pacific theatre flying P-38s before returning to the Iowa State wrestling squad in the spring of 1946.<sup>70</sup>

The fall of 1945 marked the GI's return to the gridiron. The number of discharged veterans and current Navy trainees on the football squad was so great that the athletic department found it necessary to indicate in the roster which players were civilians. This could be interpreted as an outward display of patriotism on behalf of the college, but likely occurred due to the noticeable age difference between veteran and non-veteran players. For example, Norman Anderson entered Iowa State in 1945. He played three seasons on the Cyclone football team as a line backer after returning from the European theatre where he served as a B-24 pilot with the 15th Air Force. Harle Rollinger and Vic Weber both saw service overseas and were members of the 1947 Cyclones football team.<sup>71</sup>

Golf proved to be a popular sport among returning GIs at Iowa State. In an expression of their solidarity, as well as their love for the game, Iowa State and Ames area veterans held what up to that point was the largest veterans only golf tournament in the country. Iowa State golf coach Hugo Otopalik organized the event. Such an undertaking does not lead one to

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> "Three Cherokee Men Spark Wrestling Team," *Iowa Daily Student*, Jan. 3, 1946; "Four Lettermen on Tennis Squad," *Iowa Daily Student*, April 5, 1946; "Veterans, Transfers, Freshmen Bolster Iowa State's 1946 Basketball Squad," *Iowa Daily Student*, Oct. 18, 1945.

<sup>71</sup> "Able Norman Anderson," *Iowa Daily Student*, Nov. 12, 1947. "This Week's Athletes," *Iowa Daily Student*, Nov. 22, 1947.

believe that veterans expressed disinterest in being active participants in campus athletics.<sup>72</sup> Students Harold Simcox and Charles Schalk saw an opportunity to cash in on the popularity of golf among returning veterans. Starting with 3,000 golf balls and flood lights, Simcox and Schalk opened Ames first lighted golf range on six acres of land south of highway 69.<sup>73</sup>

Married students were also involved in athletics at Iowa State. Joyce and Roy Fisher were 20 and 22 years old respectively in the fall of 1945 when they were given the distinction of being the first married couple to be cheerleaders at Iowa State. Roy returned to Iowa State after serving as a B-17 pilot. After Roy resumed his studies, his wife encouraged him to try out for the cheer squad. The *Daily Student* described Joyce as “a cheerleader who can cook,” highlighting a dichotomy in the understanding of the role of the veteran’s spouse.<sup>74</sup>

Aside from sanctioned sports, intramural activities also provided an outlet for students seeking to remain involved and active. Holding true to Dickinson’s prediction, softball and volleyball were very popular among the student population at Iowa State. The number of participants in intramural athletics at colleges and universities was so great that the Veterans Administration stated that their insurance would not cover sports injuries received outside of regularly scheduled courses.<sup>75</sup> Students living in Pammel and West Courts were also among those who participated in intramural sports. The 1947 Class A intramural softball title went to the Pammel Pops, a team of married students living in

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<sup>72</sup> “GI Golf Tourney Will End Friday,” *Iowa Daily Student*, July 23, 1946.

<sup>73</sup> “War Veterans Turn Dream into Profit,” *Iowa Daily Student*, June 26, 1946.

<sup>74</sup> Fortmann, Shirliann. “Roy and Joyce Fisher,” *Iowa Daily Student*, Oct. 12, 1945.

<sup>75</sup> “VA Won’t Stand Athletic Injuries,” *Iowa Daily Student*, Nov. 27, 1946.

Pammel Court. The married students of West Court placed second in the Class B intramural softball tournament that year.<sup>76</sup>

The rise in popularity of sports as well as the increasing number of married students on campus created a unique set of circumstance for ticket sales. Wives not enrolled in courses at Iowa State did not qualify for the discounted tickets offered to enrolled students. Students felt this was an injustice and sought to remedy the situation. Feeling that the wives of students needed equal rights for participation in campus activities was so strong that in the fall quarter of 1946 wives of enrolled students were able to purchase football tickets at the regular student rate. In hopes of increasing the number in attendance at sporting events, the administration encouraged student's wives in particular to purchase tickets.<sup>77</sup>

Nationwide colleges and universities did not treat female veterans with the same largess that greeted their male counterparts. This is reflected in how little literature is available that directly addresses the experience of the female veteran on the college campus. Veterans in general preferred larger colleges and universities with professional and graduate programs. As such, colleges and universities that catered exclusively to women did not focus on the female veteran but continued to focus on retaining students from the privileged middle and upper classes. This fact was lamented by university administrators considering limiting female enrollment at their own institutions while small liberal arts colleges' enrollment levels stagnated. On the Iowa State campus female GIs made their presence known.

When asked by a *Daily Student* reporter if an exclusive organization was needed for women GIs, Ruth Feucht said she was very much in favor of it as "women veterans are

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<sup>76</sup> "Pops Shut Out Sheep to Win Class A Title," "Sigma Chi-Delta Edge West Court to Take B Crown," *Iowa Daily Student*, Aug, 23, 1947.

<sup>77</sup> "Wives to Get Special Grid Rates," *Iowa State Daily Student*, September 27, 1946.

outnumbered and for that reason the activities of the present organizations center around men.”<sup>78</sup> Virginia Hildreth, a former member of the Women’s Army Corps agreed. However, the popularity of male dominated veterans organizations on campus meant that many would continue to attend those meetings rather than break from the status quo.

Despite the vast amount of post-war student programming marketed to women focusing on home economics, not all women sought to be professional homemakers. Jean Schudder was studying science while she was rooming with Frances Constance, and was hoping to study preservation of tropical fruits after graduation. Schudder was not the lone female in her science classes. Although the 1946 freshman handbook highlighted the “special courses in homemaking being offered” a number of veteran’s wives expressed interest in hard sciences.<sup>79</sup> Under a program entitled “Mature Special Students,” J.R. Sage, the registrar of the college, permitted wives of students to take single college courses without applying for admission into a degree program.

Apart from participation in student activities and athletics, GIs enrolled at Iowa State proved to be rather enterprising. Those enrolled at Iowa State under the GI bill received a \$90 per month allowance, which offset the costs of living expenses. Many felt this was inadequate, especially given that that economy was experiencing a period of inflation. To supplement their monthly stipend, many students started small businesses.

Almost immediately after veterans began entering colleges and universities, opinion articles appeared lamenting what many considered to be inadequate monetary support the federal government gave them. The December 1947 issue of *Life Magazine* posed the

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<sup>78</sup> “Women Ex-G.I.’s Feel Men Dominate Veteran’s Clubs,” *Iowa State Daily Student*, May 23, 1946.

<sup>79</sup> Iowa State College Freshman Handbook. Vol 6. Sept. 1946.

question “can you get along on your GI money” to students at Iowa University. Ninety nine percent of them reported that they could not. That same article described the veteran student as poor, but hard working.<sup>80</sup> One student expressed his feelings in an opinion article entitled “why do veterans go to college?” The student was hoping to counter the argument that veterans enrolled in school to keep from working. The conclusion was succinct, “veterans are going to college for an education to better themselves, and not for the money that is in it.”<sup>81</sup> The start of the second quarter in the fall of 1947 brought a drop in registration to many colleges and universities. Although it is impossible to determine the exact cause of this drop, it is reasonable to attribute this drop, in part, to students’ inability to support themselves on subsistence payments alone. For married students, especially those with children, balancing school and work outside the home would be especially difficult. In 1948 Congress authorized an increase in subsistence allowances, raising the allowance to \$75 a month for singles, \$105 for couples and \$120 for families.<sup>82</sup>

For some veteran students at Iowa State, it was necessary to work their way through college. The demographic that felt the most strain were married students attempting to support a family during a time of increasing prices. The wife of a student living in Pammel Court declared that it was impossible to live on \$90 a month. The first item cut from the budget was clothes. Undoubtedly many former service men and women could have been seen walking the campus wearing fatigue jackets and other pieces of military uniforms.

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<sup>80</sup> “Veterans at College,” *Life Magazine*, December 1947, pgs. 112, 113.

<sup>81</sup> Editorial. “Why of Vets in College?,” *Iowa Daily Student*, June 18, 1946.

<sup>82</sup> Michael J. Bennett, *When Dreams Came True: The GI Bill and the Making of Modern America* (Washington, D.C.: Brassey’s Press, 2000), 242.; Durwin M. Hanson, “Evaluation of the Veterans Administration Rehabilitation Program for Students Entering Iowa State College” (PhD dissertation, Iowa State College, 1956), 2.

One student, an unmarried veteran majoring in chemistry, argued that his monthly stipend more than covered his expenses. He stated he was able to save a portion of his allowance and went on to suggest that veterans should be more appreciative of the opportunities provided to them at the expense of the tax payer. When comparing the number of letters to the editor lamenting about insufficient funds to those suggesting veterans be more conservative with their money, it appears the latter was the least popular.

Married students living in Pammel Court had a solution to the problem of increasing food prices. On March 30, 1946 they opened Pammel Grocery, an exclusive co-op for the residents of Pammel Court. The store was not intended to be a for-profit venture, but was established for convenience and to counter the high prices found in Ames markets due to food shortages. Married veterans wishing to purchase shares in the venture could do so for \$25. A board of seven directors managed the affairs of the store, including the hiring of employees. A majority of these employees were the wives living in the adjacent trailers.<sup>83</sup>

In July of 1947 the directors were reporting a \$12,000 monthly turnover with a return of seven percent for its investors. In March 1947 the store was reporting a profit of \$2,400, a ten percent dividend for investors. The gamble paid off, as prices at the store fell with each quarter. The business proved so successful that a second store opened in January 1948.<sup>84</sup>

The economy during the years immediately following the war took a slight turn for the worse. Increasing prices and low income meant students at Iowa State had to take hold of their own financial situations. This shows a certain degree of maturity and foresight atypical

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<sup>83</sup> "Veterans Plan Co-Op Grocery," *Iowa State Daily Student*, Feb. 8, 1946.

<sup>84</sup> "Pammel Court Store Discloses Receipts," *Iowa Daily Student*, July 9, 1947; "Veteran's Store Pays Dividends," *Iowa Daily Student*, March 6, 1947; "New Grocery Store Opens in Pammel Court Thursday," *Iowa Daily Student*, Jan. 4, 1948.

of many college students. The creation of businesses signified that university students were becoming active participants in the economy of Iowa State.

Many reasons exist to explain the success of those who made the transition from foxhole to classroom immediately following World War Two. Iowa State administrators played a large part in this accomplishment. Dean Helser handled the unique problems of running a university during wartime with tact and a type of leadership appreciated by all. Another important factor was Iowa State's connection to Navy training programs. The Army and Navy training programs on campus meant that Iowa State was never far from the military. This relationship paid off once ISC needed additional housing units to construct Pammel Court.

The military as well as bureaucrats at the Veterans Administration recognized Iowa State's efforts. A letter from John N. Andrews, representative of the Administrator of the Veterans Administration in Washington D.C. stated that "the fine work which has been done at Iowa State College has helped to point the way for many other institutions." General Brehon Somervell wrote to President Charles Friley in the fall of 1945 to commend him for Iowa State's role in the war effort. Somervell wrote "the energy, initiative and efficiency which you and your colleagues have demonstrated in the war effort give me complete confidence that the problems of peace will be met with the same effectiveness as those of war." One of those persons who solved those problems of peace was Dean Maurice Helser.<sup>85</sup>

The 1945 edition of *The Bomb*, the Iowa State student yearbook, exclaimed that the increasing number of veterans on campus "might be termed a problem, but it is all in a day's

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<sup>85</sup> Letter from John N. Andrews to M.D. Helser. August 19, 1947. MD Helser Papers. Iowa State University Library, Ames, IA. "General Somervell Praises Iowa State," *Iowa Daily Student*, Sept. 25, 1945.

work for Dean M.D. Helser.” Helser, who was director of personnel as well as Dean of Students created a sacred bond of trust and understanding between himself and his students. Helen Wellman was a student who felt Helser understood of the student body during that time of national crisis. When she received a letter from her sweetheart, whom she had not seen in over three years, stating that he was in Des Moines but could not leave the city because of military orders, she presented her problem to Helser. In Wellman’s letter to Helser she wrote, “I stopped by your office to ask your advice, and help, on a personal problem.” Wellman revealed that her grades were below average and that her counselor would probably refuse her permission to leave town. She sought out the advice of Helser because she “felt that [he] would understand.” Helser, who was out of town, was most likely concerned that Wellman took the liberty of skipping her classes without permission. However, he did clearly understand “how important it was that we (Helen and her friend) meet again after all this time.” In blue ink underneath Helen’s signature Helser wrote the words “excused.”<sup>86</sup>

Students not yet enrolled at Iowa State presented their concerns to Dean Helser. In the fall of 1945, Richard McConaughy wrote to the registrar from the Philippines with a dilemma. McConaughy entered the Navy two weeks after his graduation from high school. He was trained as an electrician and wanted to study engineering at Iowa State after he was discharged. However, because he had not taken any foreign language courses he did not qualify for admission. McConaughy’s letter ended up on Dean Helser’s desk, who took note of McConaughy’s situation. The Iowa State Student Directory showed that he was accepted to the engineering program and entered Iowa State in the fall of 1947. McConaughy’s

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<sup>86</sup> *The Bomb*, Yearbook of Iowa State College. 1945. Ames, IA; Letter from Helen Wellman to MD Helser. Oct. 13, 1943. M.D. Helser Papers. Iowa State University Library, Ames, Iowa.

situation was not atypical. Colleges and universities agreed to accept war time service in lieu of some academic requirements. The amount of attention Helser showed to each student is evident in this case. Helser even had such a personal impact on students that they considered him family and invited him to special occasions such as weddings.<sup>87</sup>

Helser succeeded because he expressed a sense of fairness. When the department of residence discovered that Sheridan Martin failed to report the income of his wife, it constituted a violation of his lease providing grounds for eviction from his Pammel court residence. The department of residence sent Martin a notice threatening dismissal from the college and eventual forfeiture of his rights under the GI Bill if he and his wife did not vacate their dwelling. Martin refused to pay the back rent, and hired a lawyer to represent him. Roy MacAfee, Assistant Director of Residence, described Martin's attitude as "antagonistic" and pushed for Dean Helser to uphold his decision to dismiss Martin.<sup>88</sup> In September, 1947, Helser received a letter from Russell Decker, an attorney and the commander of the local American Legion post. Decker assured Helser that the College had a right to inquire about Martin's household income and adjust his rent accordingly. In closing paragraph of his letter, Decker wrote "On behalf of the American Legion I wish to again thank you for your careful consideration of this matter."<sup>89</sup> Although Decker acknowledged that he sent the letter in reference to a phone conversation he and Helser held earlier in the day, his insistence on identifying himself as commander of the local American Legion post suggests that he

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<sup>87</sup> Letter from Richard A. McConaughy to Dean M.D. Helser. Oct. 9, 1945. M.D. Helser Papers. Iowa State University Library, Ames, Iowa.

<sup>88</sup> Letter from Roy MacAfee to J.C. Schilleter. Sept. 8, 1947.

<sup>89</sup> Letter from B. Russell Decker to M.D. Helser. September 19, 1947. M.D. Helser Papers. Special Collections, Parks Library, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa.

represented Martin.<sup>90</sup> Despite insistence from the department of residence, Helser did not evict Martin, providing him time to conduct his own fact finding mission.

In October, two months after he received his eviction notice, Martin contacted Helser with the names of Pammel Court residents not reporting their spouses' income. Under each name that Martin provided, in his characteristic blue grease pencil, Helser recorded comments such as "refused to pay back rent" or "will pay back."<sup>91</sup> Martin succeeded in convincing Helser that his was not an isolated case. Helser accepted Martin's check for the back rent he owed the college, and Martin received no disciplinary consequences as a result.<sup>92</sup> Helser could have easily recommended that Martin be dismissed, as his departure from Pammel Court would free up space for students willing to pay the correct amount. However, he let Martin argue his case and understood that he could not dismiss Martin from the College while allowing others guilty of the same crime to remain enrolled. The extent of the rent fraud undoubtedly came as a surprise to Helser, but he sympathized with students subsisting in rudimentary Quonset huts on government stipends.

The support the administration and students showed to discharged GIs reflected great credit upon themselves, but also on the spirit of community brought about by jointly experiencing a series of unexpected anomalies. Dean M.D. Helser expressed an understanding of students that provided increased flexibility during times of duress. Quincy Ayres' connections to the Navy meant that Iowa State received critical building supplies that

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Martin provided the names of four students, who evidently provided Helser with an additional name written in blue pencil. No correspondence existed in the file that indicated how many students in total falsely reported their income. Telephone message to M.D. Helser, from Martin Sheridan. October 3, 1947. M.D. Helser Papers. Special Collections, Parks Library, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa.

<sup>92</sup> Letter from Roy MacAfee to J.C. Schilleter. November 11, 1947. M.D. Helser Papers. Special Collections, Parks Library, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa.

otherwise would have kept married students from enrolling. Students also stepped up and ensured their colleagues had the necessary materials and services to be successful. This proactive approach to solving problems resulted in the higher echelons of power recognizing Iowa State as a college apart from its peer institutions in regards to the devotion to helping veterans succeed.

Iowa State remained an active campus during and after the war. The influx of student veterans, which averaged a third of the student population of Iowa State in 1946, did not cause social life on the campus to come to a screeching halt. Veteran students participated in multiple student organizations simultaneously, and more often than not became those organization's leaders. Athletics also maintained its same prominence after the war with a high number of participants on intramural as well as officially sanctioned teams.

Of those veterans enrolled at Iowa State roughly a quarter to a third were married. Married students were still able to maintain an active social life, although their participation remained within the bounds of the family. Limited by income, many students took matters into their own hands and opened businesses or found other means to financially support their education and lifestyles. Wives of students also took an active role in campus leadership and participation in activities. Many organizations such as the Cardinal Guild and the YWCA ensured that these women were given the same amount of consideration as actively enrolled students. Wives, however, were not subservient to their student husbands during this time and took an active role in their own education.

The success of the veteran at Iowa State can be attributed to many different factors. Two of these factors include the understanding and foresight of university administrators such as Dean Helser and Quicny Ayres. Success may also be contributed to the support

shown to the veteran by his fellow students. The post-war experience is unique to every college and university. Veterans entering Iowa State defied all the stereotypes regarding social maladjustment and in their contributions they created a long lasting impact on the history of the institution.

## MARRIED VETERANS AS STUDENTS

In 1963 Betty Friedan published the *Feminine Mystique*, a treatise on the condition of women in the postwar era. In her work, Friedan provided an exposé on the world of the suburban woman and painted a picture of a content wife, young child on her hip, kissing her husband goodbye before he started his morning commute. All the while the young woman was caught in an internal crossfire whereby she was torn between her obligation to family and to her own ambitions. Friedan described this occurrence as “the problem with no name.” According to Friedan, women of the postwar era strove to achieve levels of prescribed femininity that did not include careers or a life outside of being married and raising a family. As a result, the average age of marriage declined as women set their personal aspirations aside and instead focused on dating. In turn this led to an increased birth rate, the now infamous baby boom.<sup>93</sup>

An article written by Susan Hartmann for *Women's Studies* argued that women put the needs of male veterans ahead of their own, thus sacrificing their autonomy. Hartmann scoured the pages of advice literature regarding how women should accommodate returning veterans. Literature of this type portrayed veterans as meek and somewhat helpless when it came to the readjustment into civilian life. As a result, the articles advised women to be comforting and understanding and to help their spouses, brothers, and fathers regain the self-confidence required to function in the postwar United States. Above all, returning servicemen required feminine women who reassured them of their worth.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2007), Introduction.

<sup>94</sup> Susan M. Hartmann, “Prescriptions for Penelope: Literature on Women’s Obligations to Returning World War II Veterans,” *Women’s Studies* 5 (1978): 223-229.

Although these attitudes can explain the general relationship between the sexes during the demobilization of The Second World War, they make broad assumptions and leave no room for the practical thinking that marked the mindset of the 1940s. In particular, the college campus remained a place where women not only aspired to their own careers, but many did so in addition to managing a home. In many instances gender roles and the division of labor changed during the course of the war and did not immediately reverse to a prewar status. The attitudes toward marriage held by college aged students and the actions of education administrators reflected cooperation and practicality over patriarchy.

Several different factors led to the changes in postwar attitudes regarding dating and marriage. During the Second World War the odds of finding a partner placed women at a disadvantage. With the ratio skewed, women prized the few men that remained. Nowhere was this truer than on the college campuses of the early 1940s where women comprised the majority of those enrolled. However, the experience at Iowa State College was not quite as dire. Beginning in 1942, Iowa State hosted military trainees in the Navy's Electrical and Diesel program. The Navy's V-12 program and Bakers' and Cooks' training rotated several thousand men through campus. Historian Jenny Barker-Devine noted in the *Sesquicentennial History of Iowa State University* that the trainees made the most of their time in Ames, and "blended into student life as they participated in athletics, joined fraternities and clubs, and took part in social activities on campus."<sup>95</sup> Although coeds seemed grateful for the sex ratio balance provided by the military training programs after the war, their attitudes towards these same men shifted when they returned as veterans.

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<sup>95</sup> Jenny Barker Devine, "Loyal and Forever True: Student Life at Iowa State University," *A Sesquicentennial History of Iowa State University: Tradition and Transformation*, eds. Dorothy Schwieder and Gretchen Van Houten (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 2007), 157.

In her book on the evolution of dating, Beth Bailey argued that women on postwar college campuses attempted to erase the experience of war. Dating before the war consisted of a cat and mouse game based on popularity, ranking and socially accepted rules. Favoring a return to the status quo eager coeds clashed with returning veterans, now students of the world, who viewed things differently.<sup>96</sup> Lucille Drakesmith summed up the attitude in an op-ed piece for the *Iowa State Daily Student* when she said, “The veterans are polite and sweet to the girls, but I wish they wouldn’t think that the women are all out after husbands!” The biggest complaint seemed to be that male veterans lacked the manners of a pre-war man intent on wooing a potential mate. Male veterans were determined to be successful at Iowa State, making them appear detached to women students.<sup>97</sup>

The men provided an explanation for their behavior. Citing their newfound maturity, four male students responded to Drakesmith’s comment by saying veterans have “seen the world from one end to the other,” making many aspects of campus life seem trivial. Additionally, these men encountered all “the women who frequent this old globe from Brisbane to Reykjavik,” and as a result they simply “know what they want” in a mate. Drakesmith’s respondents addressed their aloof attitude as well by not denying it existed, but by blaming female students for not adapting to the veteran’s new worldview.<sup>98</sup>

Men and women off campus also had to settle postwar differences. In his study of “Midwest,” Illinois, sociologist Robert Havighurst described veterans as having romantic impatience coupled with an indignant attitude. In his chapter entitled “Homecoming” he

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<sup>96</sup> Beth L. Bailey, *From Front Porch to Back Seat: Courtship in Twentieth-Century America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), 41.

<sup>97</sup> Irene Meyer, “Men Also Fall Short of Perfect: Veterans Declared Too Independent,” *Iowa State Daily Student*, February 22, 1946.

<sup>98</sup> James J. Kratoska, “Warning on Spinsterhood,” *Iowa State Daily Student*, February 23, 1946.

wrote, “the veteran was likely to be an impetuous suitor, alternately ardent and indifferent toward girls with whom he went.”<sup>99</sup> The women of Midwest agreed, saying “I think on a whole they’re more insulting.” Male veterans felt that women changed while they were away, and not for the better. “The girls are more wild,” one veteran remarked, “their morals are much worse.”<sup>100</sup> The attitude immediately following the war was that months or years of relative self-sufficiency turned men callous and women amoral.

The idea of a less than a fervent homecoming is not in keeping with popular beliefs about life the United States in the postwar era. Ticker tape parades capture the imagination and stick in popular memory. In reality when it comes to human relationships such emotions are not cut and dried. Many couples felt compelled to marry before one of them, usually the husband, left for the extended periods demanded by military service. Infidelity was rife. According to Kenneth Rose, “the Red Cross estimated that in the Seventh Army alone, an average of five soldiers a day received word that their wives were seeking a divorce or were involved in infidelity.”<sup>101</sup> Of course, men were just as unfaithful. Nights of debauchery with local prostitutes were prevalent among servicemen. Although writers seemed quick to point out infidelity among women, one of the women in Havighurst’s study felt her husband and “most of the other men in service have placed their wives on a shining altar.”<sup>102</sup> Perhaps wives gave their husbands more credit than they deserved, as a poll of women also revealed that women tolerated the idea of an unfaithful husband.

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<sup>99</sup> Robert J. Havighurst, et al., *The American Veteran Back Home: A Study of Veteran Readjustment* (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1951), 75.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 76.

<sup>101</sup> Kenneth D. Rose, *Myth and the Greatest Generation* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 109.

<sup>102</sup> Havighurst, 39.

Returning veterans were not mistaken about a change in the moral climate of the country. In general sexual morals loosened while instances of teenage delinquency increased. Although most of the evidence is anecdotal, it does help explain, in part, the popular reaction of returning veterans in regard to their female peers. Women who worked in war time industries became objectified by their male coworkers. A study of the Municipal Relations Court in Philadelphia, reported that 89 out of the 100 complaints lodged came from wives complaining about a husband's affair at work.<sup>103</sup> Couples frequently engaged in licentious behavior on the job. According to historian Kevin Starr the problem of workers sneaking off to the bomb shelters at a Lockheed plant in California became so worrisome that "management requested that employees refrain from leaving garments and discarded condoms on the floor."<sup>104</sup>

Despite changing attitudes, the number of wartime marriages flourished. In 1946 the American marriage rate was the second highest in the world at 16.4 per 1,000 population. The age at which couples married declined, too, a trend that continued into the 1950s. If anyone criticized wartime marriages it did not seem to discourage anyone. A study conducted at Ohio State University revealed that 68 percent approved of wartime marriages. In the college age group the approval ratings were 71 percent for women and 40 percent for college age men.<sup>105</sup>

The motives for marrying that time fell into several categories. Many couples who put off marriage during the 1930s in hopes of greater financial security found that the uncertainty generated by the war could not be an obstacle. The unsettling idea of not knowing when, or

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<sup>103</sup> Rose, 102.

<sup>104</sup> Kevin Starr, *Embattled Dreams: California in War and Peace, 1940-1950* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 128.

<sup>105</sup> Rose, 106.

if, the couple would be reunited compounded by the fact that both were getting older, motivated many in committed relationships to seal the deal. Men in particular found it ideal to marry before leaving, as insurance of a recognizable home life should they return physically disabled.<sup>106</sup> It is also reported that many married out of an act of misguided patriotism. For all the romantic images that war conjures in the young or naive, the initial spike in marriage rates resulted more from practicality or convenience than devoted fervor.

This became painfully apparent in the homecoming stages when couples realized how much each person changed during the course of the war. A woman who married before her husband left often lived with her parents for financial reasons. This resulted in stymied development and caused friction once the husband returned to a wife who had not matured as quickly as military life forced him to do. Women for whom war interrupted their marriage had a much different experience. Upon returning home, male veterans found it necessary to reassert their control in a household run successfully by their wives for months or years. This came at great annoyance to a number of married servicemen who suddenly became restless.<sup>107</sup>

The chief complaint centered on the division of labor. As one woman in the Midwest study remarked, “Now I take care of those bills and pay the insurance on the car and keep everything going; and it’s going to be difficult for me when he comes back because it’ll be so hard for me, after taking care of everything so long, to hand it all back to him.” Other wives complained of husbands who, upon returning, pattered aimlessly around the house. Many

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid, 107.

<sup>107</sup> Havighurst, et al., 86.

commented that such behavior continued until they could establish clear divisions of labor and provide male veterans with an established sense of responsibility.<sup>108</sup>

Experts took notice of the trends in marriage and expressed concerns over the impact of such vulnerable unions on society. Sociologist Rueben Hill, who taught at Iowa State College from 1945-1949, wrote extensively on the subject and was considered an expert on marriages and the family. In a book co-authored by Evelyn Mills Duval and published in 1945, Hill captures the essence of postwar relations between the sexes:

Men toughened by the rigors of war and by the day-by-day give and take of a man's world at an army post or on a battleship find that they have lost some of their technique where women are concerned. The tenderness that may have come so naturally to the prewar schoolboy now lies buried beneath the brusque sophistication of the man of war. Conversation doesn't come as easily nor from as deep a pool of sincerity now that there are things that cannot be discussed. The ways of women are strange, and it takes time to get to talking their language again. When that time comes, there is still the job of sorting out all the old dreams and values so that they make sense in terms of the real world the service man comes back to. What he thought he wanted when he went away may have no importance when he returns, but the girl he left behind may have other ideas. No, getting married after the war is not as simple as lying two dollars on the county clerk's desk and walking off...it will take a little time...<sup>109</sup>

Hill's view reflected the sentiment society held towards veterans, among them that exposure to the rigors and demand of military life turned veterans inward as a result of "things that cannot be discussed." This comment was made in reference to those veterans who witnessed firsthand the horrors of war, of which the number was smaller than expected. An estimated 800,000 to 1 million Americans saw combat, an important fact that is often overlooked in popular memory. With this in mind, one must take into consideration Hill's

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 83.

<sup>109</sup> Evelyn Millis Duvall and Rueben Hill, *When You Marry* (Boston: D.C. Heath & Company, 1945), 389.

gross generalization. Although the war left a deep impression on all of those who served, it is improbable that all men who returned were instantly at odds with society.<sup>110</sup>

Hill directly mentioned postwar marriage, although his ideas were relevant to all wartime marriages. The blatantly sexist comment that “the ways of women are strange” must be taken into context. Surely a small degree of adjustment by both sexes was required after long absences. As previously stated, men had difficulty adjusting to their wives’ newfound independence. The United States had never before experienced such large numbers of women working out of the home before The Second World War. As Hill illustrated, this resulted in complex relationships and signaled a change in perceptions of gender roles and marriage in American society.<sup>111</sup>

At the time of Hill’s writing, college aged students and those preparing to enter colleges and universities had a positive view of marriage. Their motives for marrying differed from those not enrolled in higher education. The same Ohio State study that explored individual’s views towards marriage, asked participants to rank their motives for marrying. Office and defense workers ranked government payments and insurance for military personnel high on their list, while college students ranked this last.<sup>112</sup>

This naiveté college students expressed concerning marriage did not result in disastrous marriages. Although concerned about unions formed as a result of rash decision making, Hill placed a great amount of faith in college aged youth. In an address to the North Dakota Conference on Social Welfare, Hill shared with fellow sociologists his feelings that “we have to recognize that young people are a community asset.” He went on to say that “the nineteen-

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<sup>110</sup> Rose, 45.

<sup>111</sup> Michael Gambone, *The Greatest Generation Comes Home* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2005): 63.

<sup>112</sup> Rose, 106.

year-old girl and the twenty-year-old boy are capable of great tasks and must be given an opportunity to share in running our communities. They must be entrusted with responsibilities commensurate with those they held in service and war production and farm assignments.”<sup>113</sup> According to Hill, young couples needed to be encouraged to be active participants in community building. Instead of looking upon married students as a liability, colleges and universities assisted these couples in their development.<sup>114</sup>

Many people sought refuge in marriage as a result of The Second World War. Nationwide, twenty percent of the veterans who enrolled in colleges in universities after 1945 were married. Married non-veterans made up roughly 3% of the total married student population. This trend continued into the late 1950s.<sup>115</sup> The perception that college students were inexperienced and insulated from the vicissitudes of life did not apply to the veteran student and spouse. Like the veteran who returned to the farm or civilian employer, the veteran student faced a housing shortage, an ever burgeoning bureaucracy to overcome, inflation and the feelings of uncertainty. College students seemed to find solace in marriage which, coupled with the routine of campus life, provided a sense of normality.

Educators approached the idea of married veteran students with caution. Until the advent of the GI Bill the college campus was the preserve of single undergraduates. Professionals worried that students would not be able to handle the pressures of marriage and academic coursework. Married veterans nationwide proved themselves by maintaining higher

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<sup>113</sup> Abstract of address delivered by Reuben Hill to the North Dakota Conference of Social Welfare. Department of Sociology Biographic Files, Special Collections, Parks Library, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> An estimate by Iowa State President Charles Friley estimated that 40% of veterans who enrolled in 1946 at Iowa State were married. Charles Friley to Col. John N. Andrews, Charles Friley Papers, Special Collections, Parks Library, Ames, IA.

grades, on average, than their unmarried peers. Even more astonishing is that married veterans with children outscored married veterans with none. Concerns about the adjustment of married students to the rigors of academic life came to naught after the first semester.<sup>116</sup>

After married veterans proved their ability in the classroom, concern shifted from academic strength to the family unit. Marriage and family professionals expressed concern of possible discontent in the veteran's home due to time constraints. Juggling studies, a marriage and a full time or part time job placed strain on marriages. However, as one writer stated, the couple became too busy to bicker.<sup>117</sup> There is evidence to suggest a grain of truth lies within the argument. In an article written about the University of Oregon, Lester A. Kirkendall showed that an active life promoted strong marriage bonds. Kirkendall suggested that the patterns established by couples in the honeymoon phase stuck with them throughout their married life. By being active participants in extracurricular activities afforded by college life, couples "might easily find their early marital campus experience had helped them to establish an excellent basis for stimulating companionship."<sup>118</sup> Colleges and universities proved to be just as beneficial in the development of married students as it did for single undergraduates.

The influx of married students proved to be an exceptional issue for Iowa State as well as other colleges and universities nationwide. An increase in enrollment spurred by the passage of the GI Bill added more to a growing list of concerns for higher education. Among the first concerns Iowa State addressed included the area housing shortage. Four years of

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<sup>116</sup> Notes from the meeting of the Committee of Thirteen, May 5, 1947. Charles Friley Papers, Special Collections, Parks Library, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa.

<sup>117</sup> Svend Riemer, "Married Veterans Are Good Students," *Marriage and Family Living* 9, no. 1 (Feb., 1947): 12.

<sup>118</sup> Lester A. Kirkendall, "Married Undergraduates on the Campus: An Appraisal," *The Coordinator* 5, no. 2 (Dec., 1956), 54-63.

rationed building supplies preceded by the Great Depression kept the construction of homes at a standstill. Increased enrollment placed pressure on administrators to act. Early solutions included using dormitories at manufacturing sites used to house wartime laborers. Other solutions included using Camp Dodge near Des Moines as a temporary branch campus, complete with housing, until facilities at the main campus in Ames could accommodate the influx of students. The Ames community opened its doors to many students, letting out spare rooms. However, Ames could not absorb the sheer number of students. As a result administrators developed plans to construct exclusive married student housing.<sup>119</sup>

The original plan for married student housing at Iowa State included leasing surplus government trailers to students. Before the fall semester of 1946, the college established one hundred and fifty housing units in a former polo field on the north side of campus adjacent to Pammel Drive, named for botany professor L.H. Pammel. Later that summer, Quincy Ayres, an assistant to Iowa State college president Charles Friley, wrote to the naval ammunition depot in Hastings, Nebraska, to secure additional Quonset huts from the federal government. Like potential students, Quonsets proved to be in abundant supply.<sup>120</sup>

In 1941 the United States Navy asked government suppliers to develop a lightweight, portable structure that could be transported easily and assembled without the use of skilled labor. Named for Quonset, Rhode Island where they were manufactured, Quonset huts soon became a staple building of the United States armed forces and a symbol of The Second World War. Made of corrugated metal, the walls sat on a low steel frame with a plywood

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<sup>119</sup> "Housing Crisis Increases," *Iowa State Daily Student*, Sept 22, 1945; "Housing Shortage Will Continue," *Iowa State Daily Student*, October 24, 1945; "House to House Canvass Begins Today," *Iowa State Daily Student*, February 15, 1946;

<sup>120</sup> Quincy Ayers to Lt. Commander W.R. Boyer, January 31, 1946. Charles Friley Papers. Special Collections, Parks Library, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa.

foundation. After being delivered to Ames, Iowa State modified the Quonsets into living quarters. By the end of 1947, Iowa State College had the third largest married student housing community in the nation and as student enrollment continued to climb into the early 1950s, Iowa State outpaced Michigan State College and the University of Michigan to have the largest married student housing facilities in the country.<sup>121</sup>

The dimensional uniformity of the Quonset huts caused married student housing to appear as a collegiate Levittown, minus a few amenities. The college provided water, sewer and electricity. Residents made due with public toilet and laundry facilities however. The biggest complaint stemmed from the cold winter air that made living in the huts an adventure. Anne Basile who moved to Ames in 1946 with her husband, a recently discharged Navy veteran and graduate student, described her experience in Pammel Court as “love in a tin can.” Anne stated that during the first snowfall of winter she “shivered so violently, my teeth chattered.” Despite the unfavorable conditions, Anne maintained a positive attitude as she reflected on her time spent in Pammel Court: “we were grateful for a place to live while my husband attended college no matter how cold and inconvenient the situation.”<sup>122</sup>

In many ways the students of Iowa State College typified the suburban lifestyle of the late 1940s described by Friedan and Hartmann. Married student housing provided the Levittownesque backdrop and while the majority male student body tromped off to class many left their young wives and children at home to ponder “is this all?” Friedan lamented

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<sup>121</sup> “Pammel Facilities Ranked High in College Survey,” *Iowa Daily Student*, December 4, 1947; Victor A. Christopherson, “College Marriage in Public and Private Institutions of Higher Education, 1943-1958,” *The Family Life Coordinator* 8, no. 3 (Mar., 1960), 51.

<sup>122</sup> Anne Basile, e-mail message to Tanya Zanish-Belcher, July 17, 2007. Maurice Helser Papers. Special Collections, Parks Library, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa.

that women did not make furthering their education a priority but chose instead to focus on “putting husband through” school. An observer at Iowa State College in the late 1940s would have easily seen the works of Friedan and Hartmann played out in real life.

As was the case with “Midwest,” educators grew concerned over the division of labor in the married student’s household. The standard arrangement in such households included spouses working full time to support a household while the other spouse, most commonly the husband, engaged in full time study. This afforded husbands an opportunity to finish school, but it came at the expense to the wife who chose to forego her education so that her husband might continue his.

Although this type of thinking prevailed in places such as “Midwest,” in all actually it did not represent the best use of resources. Living at the doorstep of an institution of higher education afforded wives the opportunity to further their own education, and undoubtedly proved tempting to women toiling at temporary jobs until their husbands graduated. This could prove equally challenging to the conventional male ego and accepted gender norms which dictated that the husband be the primary breadwinner of a given family. Unless the husband planned on graduating quickly, the ideal college marriage required both spouses to be students.

Small budgets proved to be the barrier to a dual student household. The GI Bill provided veterans with a \$90 a month living allowance. Couples obtained any additional funding through family members or additional jobs. In a period of high inflation, such as in postwar America, \$90 resulted in a bare necessities lifestyle. Iowa State, however, made a good faith effort to provide for the education of spouses.

During the fall semester of 1946 the Home Economics Department began marketing a series of courses on the topic of homemaking to the wives of enrolled veterans. Such a program was not out of the ordinary on Iowa State's campus, which by 1944 hosted the largest Home Economics Department in the country. The courses marketed in the fall of 1946 attracted 194 students in the spring of 1947, suggesting a favorable response from students. If women enrolled in these courses out of a genuine interest in culinary arts or interior design or out of a subconscious drive to fulfill a prescribed gender role is subject to debate. Most often, it seemed that the spouses of veterans were the ones who played the role of Friedan's quintessential housewife.<sup>123</sup>

Marketing courses in home economics to the wives of veterans was consistent with Iowa State's role of offering extension courses. Regardless of marital status, the majority of women on the Iowa State campus in the mid 1940s enrolled in home economics courses.<sup>124</sup> Many women enrolled for the sole purpose of finding a husband, not a career, and thus did not enroll in courses such as philosophy or physics because such courses would not help them as wives and could place them in competition with men. The increase in the number of married students after the war meant that women did not benefit from programs such as preparing dinners in practice homes and training on new appliances, nutrition or laundry, techniques they became acquainted with as new brides. Instead, Iowa State focused on

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<sup>123</sup> "Homemaking Class for Veterans Wives," *Iowa State Daily Student*, Aug. 3, 1946; "Adult Homemaking Class Enrolls 194," *Iowa State Daily Student*, April 29, 1947; Iowa State Freshman Handbook, Vol. 6, Sept. 1946.

<sup>124</sup> Between 1946-1948, 65% of female ISC graduates majored in Home Economics. Megan Birk, "Playing House" (master's thesis, Iowa State University, 2004), 70.

classes such as interior design and the wives of veterans focused their attention on creating a peaceful environment for their husbands and children.<sup>125</sup>

The Agriculture Engineers Student Branch Wives' Club provides an example of women focusing their attention on their family instead of themselves. Formed in 1948, the student wives' club organized under the auspices of aiding "our husbands in their society activities in any way they may desire." The organization fit comfortably within patriarchal constructs. The meetings functioned primarily as a means of organized social interaction between members. The student wives' club had a sponsor, whom they referred to as "Matron," Mrs. Cooney Beresford, whose husband led the Agriculture Engineering Department. The Wives' Club hosted guest speakers for discussions on topics such as child care and interior decorating, but the perennial favorite was the year end banquet where members would present PhTs to members whose husbands graduated.<sup>126</sup> The PhT, a play on PhD, represented the Putting Hubby Through degree, one which Friedan suggested women aspired to achieving more than an academic degree of their own.

However, prewar home economics education programs were about more than turning out eligible wives. Large home economics departments, like those at Iowa State, participated in research projects that helped make the discipline into a science. Neither were women passive participants, biding their time until married life took them out of the classroom, but active members of a vibrant department and serious students. Home economics, as explained by historian Megan Birk, "reduced strict constraints by allowing higher education

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<sup>125</sup> Ibid., 60.

<sup>126</sup> Constitution of the Agriculture Engineers Student Wives Club. Feb. 1948. Agriculture Engineers Student Wives Club Papers. Special Collections, Parks Library, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa.

possibilities [for women].”<sup>127</sup> The desire to create a harmonious home life might have taken precedent over immediate personal goals, but it did not create the ill effects that Friedan suggested would be present. Evidence shows that those who focused on the “PhT” or in prescribed home economics programs “did not complain of exceptional boredom, but became better prepared for the rigors of consumerism and the strain of work at home, in addition to a viable career.”<sup>128</sup>

Although the 1946 Freshman Handbook highlighted the “special courses in homemaking being offered,” a number of the veteran’s spouses expressed interest in hard sciences. Under a program entitled “Mature Special Students,” Registrar J.R. Sage permitted the wives of students to take single college courses without applying for admission into a degree program. Many student expressed interest in courses in chemistry, modern languages, general science, psychology, English, applied art and sociology.<sup>129</sup> The motives for students to register for such classes outside of a degree program could vary. Hartmann wrote that the advice literature of the 1940s suggested that women engaged in self development in order to be better companions with returning veterans who now found themselves interested in world affairs and cultural events. Although probable that women engaged in studies in an effort to attract men, such a conclusion leaves out the idea of women participating in such activities for their own self benefit or to strengthen their marriage. It is agreed that successful couples tended to share, among other things, a common intellect or interest in learning. It can be argued that program such as “Mature Special Students” attempted to close the education gap and provide an additional common ground for married students and their spouses.

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<sup>127</sup> Birk, 14.

<sup>128</sup> Birk, 73.

<sup>129</sup> “Mature Special Students” folder. 1946. M.D. Helser Papers. Special Collections, Parks Library, Ames, Iowa.

Despite the inherent differences, spouses did enjoy spending time together and various activities at Iowa State College provided opportunities to do so. It became important for students to facilitate their own events which provided them with a sense of ownership and responsibility in guiding their own social life. Equally important was that events be cheap, or free, to accommodate those living on small G.I. Bill stipends.

“May Daze for Marrieds” was an event that many married students looked forward to in 1947. Bands, a dance and a vaudeville show of married student actors comprised the three day festival. Fathers with children competed in the diaper derby, a contest to see who could change an infant in the least amount of time. The event, celebrating the married student, proved so unique that *Look* magazine featured it as part of a photographic essay. The married student population integrated well with traditional, single students at Iowa State. When married students organized the May Daze program, a call for babysitters went out to members of the university community. Over two hundred and fifty individuals volunteered, more than necessary.<sup>130</sup>

At the end of 1947 administrators were still unsure what to make of the married student population. In a sense, they held fast to their prewar perceptions of the college being a place for single undergraduate students. As a result of changed attitudes towards marriage, many predicted that married students would become a mainstay of campuses nationwide. Universities such as Northwestern and Wisconsin invested in permanent housing for married students, while others such as Illinois flirted with such plans before abandoning them and allowing the local economy to house married students. As the levels of married graduate and

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<sup>130</sup> “May Daze,” *Iowa State Daily Student*, July 8, 1947; “May Daze will Feature Diaper Derby,” *Iowa State Daily Student*, April 26, 1947; “*Look* Will Cover May Daze Affair,” *Iowa Daily Student*, April 29, 1947; “Mr. and Mrs. Week End at Iowa State,” *Look Magazine*, July 22, 1947; Letter to the Editor, “Thanks to Baby Sitters,” *Iowa State Daily Student*, May 6, 1947.

undergraduate students waned in the mid to late 1950s, Iowa State University began converting married student housing into single student apartments.

At Iowa State the immediate postwar years proved to be more about practicality than reinforcing gender roles. If administrative actions favored men it was because men had the largest impact on postwar enrollment, not because they believed women were not capable of similar academic achievements. Students at Iowa State did not consider the domestic arts and sciences to be a pseudoscience meant to reinforce gender norms, but rather a serious endeavor that could strengthen a marriage. Although married women at Iowa State focused on “putting hubby through,” it did not equate to the negative stigma predicted by experts and expounded upon by Friedan or Hartmann.

## CONCLUSION

The GI Bill emerged during a trying time in the United State's history. The number of potential veterans concerned the American public, which witnessed with awe the resolve of the veterans of the First World War demanding their rights be upheld. The idea of demobilized military personnel returning stateside to a depressed labor market did not sit well with members of the American Legion or those for whom economic recovery was a top priority, such as Frederic Delano and the National Resource Planning Board. Both groups acted independently of each other to set into motion the design and passage of the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944. President Roosevelt, the patron saint of social welfare programs in the United States, maintained his distance from any legislation that might encourage exclusivity. As a result the administration dragged its feet, and the fate of comprehensive veterans legislation rested in the American Legion and its spokespersons in Congress. The end result included provisions for veterans for whom the war interrupted their education to return to school and allowed for new student enrollment.

Military and education experts predicted that returning veterans would be academically inferior to non-veteran students and suggested that exposure to the stressors of war would result in maladjustment. This proved to not be the case. Not only did veteran students prove to educators their aptitude for learning, they also reincorporated themselves into the social fabric of campus with relative ease. Former GIs participated in organized athletics, wrote for the student newspaper and held student leadership positions on campus. They did, however, express an air of independence and self-sufficiency atypical of non-veterans their age.

During the war, female students loathed the absence of men on campus. Despite being outnumbered, Navy and Army trainees provided the sole source of male companionship. Much to the chagrin of their female classmates, soldiers and sailors returned to campus with determination and little time for carousing. Still others returned with spouses and children.

Advice literature from the period suggested that women shower copious amounts of affection upon men returning from war zones. Experts believed that men would experience a better adjustment to postwar life if women reassured a spouse of their worth. This ended with mixed results. Many women expressed difficulty in turning over their responsibilities and newfound independence for subservient roles. As a result, authors such as Betty Freidan emphasized that passive attitudes on the part of the wife led to discontent later in life.

The experience of women and wives at Iowa State differed. Many who enrolled in home economics classes found the work engaging. As a result of an increasing number of married students, the College extended homemaking classes to veteran's spouses. This action represented the spirit of Iowa State's extension program and a logical decision for an institution that led the way in the field of home economics. Although women participated in groups focused on "putting hubby through," student marriages at Iowa State appeared to be mutually beneficial. This is best exemplified in married student housing.

At Iowa State College, roughly 12,500 veterans enrolled using education benefits provided by the GI Bill, posing unique challenges to the Iowa State campus. Housing ranked high on the list of concerns for administrators, and through various channels Iowa State secured enough Quonset huts and trailers to construct the third largest married student housing complexes of its kind in the United States. The Pammel and West Courts

“vetsvilles” resembled postwar Levittowns, with identical, equally spaced units, but lacking all the conveniences of a subdivision such as indoor plumbing or efficient heating. The inhabitants made the most of their stay, however, forming a community organization and opening a cooperative grocery store.

Iowa State administrators played a hand in the success of veterans as students. In particular, Dean Maurice Helser displayed a passion for getting to know students and treated them with much empathy. Other faculty members contributed to the student experience at Iowa State College. Married students found an ally in Reuben Hill during a time when many educators thought matrimony served no purpose on the college campus. Although the trend in married college students waned as the marriage age increased in the 1950s, icons such as married student housing and couples counseling are mainstays at many colleges and universities.

The college campus as most recognize it today came about as a result of legislation passed in the 1940s. Colleges and universities found ways to overcome the unique challenges posed by the first group of student veterans, and subsequent veterans introduced additional anomalies. Although the reasons for the GI Bill changed, the impact is equally meaningful to the many that benefit from it. If historians are in need of examples of the cooperation and esprit de corps that supposedly typified the “greatest generation,” they should do themselves a favor and consider a critical study of the American college campus.

Evidence of the impact of the GI Bill on culture in the United States is inescapable. Although the provisions of the Servicemen’s Readjustment Act of 1944 expired in 1956, soldiers from The Second World War forward benefited from several generations of GI Bill legislation. When the military made the transition into a professional, all volunteer force in

the late 1970s the GI Bill became an incentive for enlisting, allowing the military to be considered a pathway of opportunity by many. Colleges and university admission literatures now boast of being “veteran and military friendly.” For current members of the United States Armed Forces, the GI Bill is as much a privilege as it is a right. The correlations between the GI Bill and personal success coupled with the high esteem in which many view members of the “Greatest Generation,” however, could lead to an incomplete understanding of this unique legislation’s birth and impact on higher education. The GI Bill ensured that the veterans of The Second World War did not sell apples on the street corner, or converge on the nation’s capitol by the tens of thousands demanding early remittance of benefits. Despite the initial doubts held by education experts, the idea to enroll thousands of veterans into education programs proved so successful that it became to be viewed as a benefit rather than a plan to avoid economic and social malaise. Scores of veterans, many of whom might not have done so had such legislation not been put in place, graduated with undergraduate and graduate degrees and in doing so influenced future generations by placing obtaining a college degree among the steps to achieving the American dream.

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