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Dr. Bixler as a Teacher

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By CYNTHIA LOVE ESTES

I WAS graduated from Colby with many pleasant memories, one of these being the privilege of taking a course under Dr. Bixler. I wish all Colby students could have attended his Tuesday evening seminar on American Thought for Dr. Bixler is one of those rare educators who is not only truly dedicated to his subject but also radiates such enthusiasm and spark that his students soon become zealous learners.

Classmates from every department were represented in the seminar on American Thought. Before the first class, many of us were a little fearful and uncertain as to what we could expect. After all, this class was to be conducted by the President of the College. We were put at ease as soon as the tall doctor strode through the door clapping his hands in a manner familiar to all Colby students and flashed his special smile. His first act was to read our enrollment cards to ascertain what name belonged with each face. After this he always called on us by our first names.

The pattern Dr. Bixler outlined at our first meeting we followed all semester. Each week he gave a short introduction to the week's material and then turned the class over to three students who, in succession, gave short talks on a philosopher and his ideas. This was concluded by Dr. Bixler's short summary on what he considered the essential points covered in the evening's discussion.

How much philosophy meant to Dr. Bixler soon manifested itself in several ways. One of his habits delighted and touched me at the same time. A phrase or quotation used by one of the students might appeal to the doctor and he would ask to have it repeated. As the phrase was reread I enjoyed watching Dr. Bixler's face as it developed a look of concentration and deep thought. I admired this proven and substantial philosopher for the time and the concern he lavished on ideas emanating from beginners.

Another prevalence was the way he could introduce his be-

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loved music into our discussions. More than once we listened to Dr. Bixler hum a few bars from a favorite symphony or concerto. Remarkably, the music always related to our discussions.

As I sat in this seminar I came to realize how vast and discerning Dr. Bixler's mind was. Many times during our discussions he inserted ideas from other areas of knowledge for us to consider in relation to our present topic. He made us understand not only the philosophical implications of an idea, but also its bearing upon almost every other aspect of life as well. I learned many new correlations unsuspected before, say, between philosophy and history or philosophy and biology. Everything seemed to come under the scrutiny of his mind.

At these Tuesday evening classes we often analyzed extremely complex problems, but under Dr. Bixler's guidance, plus his great zest, I found myself entering these discussions with great interest. I left these classes mentally aroused and with the sense of having accomplished something.

Almost as a direct result of this stimulation I found myself working harder and harder as the semester wore on, not because I had to but because I wanted to. Under Dr. Bixler's leadership the course came alive and represented a challenge to me, and I'm sure that I was not alone in this feeling. I found myself doing extra work and spending more time over my assignments. I eagerly looked forward to Tuesday's class with the feeling that for a couple of hours I was really getting the utmost out of my college education.

It was a sad moment when class ended for the last time. I had a lot of thoughts to carry away with me, but perhaps the chief thought was that I had had a wonderful opportunity: the opportunity to watch, listen and learn from a truly great educator.

