By CHARLES DEMITZ
Smile, children, for spring is on the way and winter almost past. How do we know this, you ask. A robin? A mosquito? Two mosquitos? None of these. One bright morning last week we stood in unaccustomed wonder, gaping at a smiling gray-clad gnome who ceremoniously set up a sprinkler in the midst of a minor sea.

When the ritual was completed and all systems were go, he gave a mighty twist to his sprinkler key, and suddenly there was mud. Ah, progress.

Consider: gnomes keep us swept, watered, heated, and mudded. Without the benefit of gnomes on the tiller, the scholastic ship of state in the Western Hemisphere would lie stranded in an arid wasteland, devoid of bogs and mosquitos.

**Sprinkler Defense**
Campuses would lie defenseless and open to townies, unprotected by the sprinkler system, our first line of defense. No more the quiet, reassuring chugging of nocturnal sprinklers, no more the satisfyingly anguished shriek of an intruder nailed in a cross-fire.

What can replace the satisfaction of awakening to the clamorous emptying of your own wastebasket? What can substitute for the invigorating aroma of a mop-grown bacteriological cultural culture? What can match the thrill of discovering new gnome-hideaways, where the gnomic sports of poker and sacking-out are surreptitiously practiced? What can equal the excitement of stepping carelessly on to a newly-waxed and watered walkway?

Gnomes have become central to the college experience. Gnomes are not just a maintenance crew; gnomes are a way of life.

**Gnomes' Choice**
Rice may be eleventh-ranked by National Merit Finalists—meaningless cipher. But has anyone troubled himself to discover how Rice is ranked among would-be gnomes?

Studies based on the 1964 Harris County Gnomeship Qualifying Test show that more promising gnomes chose Rice than ANY OTHER SMALL NON-STATE-SUPPORTED UNIVERSITY WITH MOCK ITALIAN RENAISSANCE ARCHITECTURE IN THE HOUSTON AREA.

When asked to explain this, Ramon Omphalos, a black belt in the Texas chapter of the National Gnome Society, cited Rice’s visionary improvement on the work-study plan (termed the “sleep-eat” program) and the outstanding opportunities in mudmanship presented by the new University construction schedule.

**Muddy Feet**
What red-blooded, mud-footed Riceite could doubt that Rice is, was, and ever shall be the mecca of gnomes everywhere, the gallant boys in grey? Accordingly, the campus store, ever mindful of the needs of its charges, will soon stock bumper stickers bearing the catchy, collegiate saying, “Rice—Number One In Gnomedom.”

Be the first on your floor to sport this colorful sign on your window, your door, your (waste—) can.