Alumni Wrote Hymn for Rice

Girard, Ross Also Did ‘Fight Song’

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“We played with the idea of writing another song for Rice, more on the order of a hymn; and after several tries, we came up with the song now known as ‘The Rice Hymn.’”

This came out in an interview we had with Dr. Louis Girard at his home a few weeks ago to find out the song’s history. We found the man quite amiable and willing to do all he could to help us revive “The Rice Hymn.”

The “Fight Song”

We first asked Dr. Girard about how he and Dr. Nealie Ross happened to write the “Fight Song.”

“We realized that Rice had only one fight song, ‘Old Gray Bonnet,’” he explained. “So after lifting a peppy tune from an opera my father had written, we took it to a Rally Club meeting, where the words were born.”

Dr. Girard went on to say that they all gathered around an ancient piano, played the song over and over, “and people just chipped in words until we had it.”

Accompanying Yell

What about the yell that goes with it, we asked, meaning the “Rice... Fight... Never Dies,” etc. chanted while the band plays the song a second time.

“That I thought up one morning as I was driving to school,” Dr. Girard grinned.

Soon after the song was written and just before a game, a meeting of students was called in the Physics Amphitheater, where it was taught to the student body.

Cheerleaders on Desks

“The cheerleaders were standing on the desks and the band was backing them up,” Dr. Girard recalled. “We must have sung it twenty times,” he laughed; “but they loved it!”

Then the nation entered World War II and the war of course preceded anything else. It was immediately after the war that the song really caught on, he said, and the students have used it ever since.

Somehow, however, “The Rice Hymn” failed to get attention like this; and we talked about this next.

“Hymn” Born in 1947

It might have been because Dr. Girard and Dr. Ross were alumni a long way from Rice when they wrote the song. “It was 1947, and we were together in medical school at New York University,” he explained.

Nostalgia for the old school must have prompted them to write another song, a serious one this time, we decided.

At informal get-togethers in Dr. Girard’s apartment, they would frequently play the piano; and it was several sessions like these which produced “The Rice Hymn.”

Original Words

Feeling that new words for the song might be a rather touchy subject, we cautiously asked Dr. Girard how the original words were written. It was no Rally Club meeting this time, we found out.

“Dr. Ross and I simply listed memorable things about the Institute,” he smiled; “and fit them in to the tune.”

What happened to the song then, we asked.

“It was put away for about a year,” he said.

Alums Meet

Then Mr. Brant Rawson, who was president of the Alumni Association, was visiting in New York. The men met through mutual friends and began talking, as alumni will, about the Institute. Finding out that Dr. Ross and Dr. Girard had written the “Fight Song,” Mr. Rawson became quite enthusiastic when he (Continued on Page Fourteen)
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(Continued from Page 9) heard “The Rice Hymn.”

“He told us that Rice could use a song like this very much,” Dr. Girard pointed out.

Arrangement Made

In the meantime, one of his patients, who was director of a vocal group known as “The King’s Men” made an arrangement of the song and recorded it. The copyright was given the Institute, and the song was officially presented at the Alumni Dinner of the 1953 Homecoming.

As tactfully as we were able, we hinted that new words might give “The Rice Hymn” the boost it needs to become a regular Rice song. Was there a possibility that the words could be revised, we asked.

Needs New Words

“I’m ’way ahead of you,” Dr. Girard chuckled. “It definitely needs new words, and I think it would be wonderful if the students themselves would write them!”