LAST PROSE OF SUMMERS

Bill Barrow Will Be Remembered

By ED SUMMERS

Just about eleven months ago, a junior engineering student at Rice Institute went home for the Christmas holidays, fell off a trampoline, hit his head on the floor, and broke his neck. When he tried to get up, he discovered he was paralyzed and without feeling from the upper chest down.

This Was the First

This was the first in a series of trials for Melvin W. (Bill) Barrow. We suspect Bill could tell you an awful lot — if he were the type of person to complain about his difficulties — about the terrible frustration of being struck down from a position of robust physical health and activity to one of absolute helplessness.

The Test

Often a person will go all his life and never truly know his mettle because the opportunity to test it does not arise. The particular test Bill Barrow is undergoing is one designed to destroy all but the strongest — to recover his abilities, Bill faces a wearisome monotony of apparently unrewarding exercise and therapy which will undoubtedly stretch over a period of years punctuated primarily by setbacks. The temptation to ease up, to become in fact the helpless vegetable pitying people wrongly believe him to be, will at times be overpowering.

The First Steps

In eleven months, Bill has made the first small but firm steps down this uninviting path to recovery. This is not a journey he makes alone. The support he has received from friends both at home and at Rice Institute has, we are told, amazed the people of Brazoria, Bill’s home town — not because it was unexpected, but because of its magnitude and warmth and sincerity.

A Grind

Right now Bill has settled into what is known at Rice as a grind. There are exercises to be done to condition his arms and hands, which have along with his shoulders regained a moderate degree of feeling and co-ordination. There are trips to Houston for therapy treatments each week. And there are hours — but we suspect they are few and far between — spent studying and reviewing schoolwork.

The Barrows have a thirty-five pound boxer dog named “Missy” which is completely uninhibited in its affection for Bill. In his present condition Bill is just about a match for the dog.

Perfumed Letters

Bill Barrow has always been a step ahead — or a step behind depending on your viewpoint — the girls, and his broken neck has not altered this one bit. He has told us he gets lots of perfumed letters. However, he begged out of fixing us up with a date if we get to Brazoria soon, because currently they are all away at school. When he was in the hospital here in Houston we had the same trouble with Bill and his nurses — he wanted them all to himself then and we suspect that is part of the story now . . .

Follows “Big Buc”

Football is still a consuming interest. Bill has followed the Blue all year. The high point for him was the Texas game because so many of his friends are Texas students. He feels that the trouble with the team recently has been an apparent tendency to take itself for granted—especially against the Aggies.

He’ll Be Back

Bill is still planning to come back to Rice soon. That day is probably further off than he would like, but still sooner than we expect. Until it comes we would like, not for the first time and certainly the last, to wish Bill Barrow all the luck in the world.