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EDUCATION

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Fine Fellows

Harvard's crusty President (1909-33) Abbott Lawrence Lowell was a Ph.D. who developed an early aversion to the Ph.D. factory system. In a famed plea that scholars should be judged by deeds and not by degrees, he wrote: "We have developed into a mass production of mediocrity." A few years before retiring, Lowell began agitating for a more creative path into teaching ("to entice and fructify imagination"). It turned into Harvard's free-wheeling Society of Fellows—a unique experiment in U.S. education.

the need of it. Harvard's main hope is that all may permanently enrich one another.

No outside angel shared Lowell's fervent faith in the scheme. "In a kind of desperation," Lowell finally endowed the society out of his own pocket, "although it took nearly all I had." (It took \$1,500,000.) Last week the impressive return on Lowell's investment was totted up in a proud report by the society's chairman, History Professor Crane Brinton.

Lowell's Return. Of 155 former Fellows (20 are now at Harvard), 128 have become top scholars at 36 U.S. (and three foreign) colleges and universities. Harvard has the lion's share, with 42 on its faculty

quinine and reserpine; Physicist Ivan A. Getting, World War II radar pioneer and now a vice president of Raytheon; Physicist James B. Fisk, president of Bell Telephone Laboratories and the West's chief expert on atom-test bans in the Geneva negotiations with the Russians.

Ideal School. Society Chronicler Brinton is quick to concede that the Fellows might have done just as well without going to Harvard, and nobody can be sure if the twice-weekly lunches and once-weekly dinners (preceded by scholarly sherry) in Eliot House have really broadened the minds of already brilliant men. "Frankly, the society does not turn out Renaissance polymaths," says Brinton. "But something rubs off from one Fellow on another." The mixing of many disciplines avoids the free-form excesses of latter-day academic brainstorming, remains a memorable experience to most former Fellows. Says one J.F., now a Defense Department political analyst: "The society as a whole would be an ideal school for those who are to serve the country well."

At the same time, it is an ideal school for men who would have no other chance to deal with the furtive gleams of their own minds. There is a breath-taking charm in a system that allows a young mathematician like English-born David Mumford, 22, now at Harvard, to pursue this kind of private passion: "At present I am working on ruled surfaces. These offer an accessible but nontrivial example of the pathology of moduli of higher dimensional varieties—a subject whose development is strikingly neglected."



George Woodruff

HARVARD'S JUNIOR FELLOWS AT ELIOT HOUSE
Something rubs off from one on another.

the chairman rises and solemnly intones: "Your aim will be knowledge and wisdom, not the reflected glamour of fame. You will seek not a near, but a distant, objective, and you will not be satisfied with what you have done. All that you may achieve or discover you will regard as a fragment of a larger pattern."

Scholar's Utopia. In 27 years, 175 gifted graduates of 58 colleges around the world have heard these words before beginning a dream life at Harvard. The society's nine Senior Fellows pick the Junior Fellows because they give rare promise of original work; the idea is to free them of the usual clock-punching requirements of graduate study. Turned loose for three years, the J.F.s can pursue whatever pleases them, from poetry to physics. They need not attend any courses or earn any degrees. At their full disposal are Harvard's libraries and laboratories; they get free room and board, plus \$3,500 a year (tax free) for bachelors, and up to \$5,500 for married men. Extra money can be had for research equipment and travel; they can toddle off to Europe or Asia.

(including three deans), followed by California with 14. Among past J.F.s (ranging in age from 26 to 55) are two Chevaliers of the French Legion of Honor, six Fellows of the National Academy of Sciences, nine Fellows of the American Physical Society, 23 Fellows of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

They have published more than 180 books, from *The Cellular Slime Molds* to *The American Business Creed*, and their interests are as diverse as their origins (from Lone Elm, Kans. to Berlin). They include Younger Poets Donald Hall and John Hollander, Sociologist William Foote Whyte (*Street Corner Society*), and World Federalist Founder Cord Meyer Jr. The two Pulitzer prizewinners: Poet Richard Wilbur (*Poems, 1943-56*) and Historian Arthur Schlesinger Jr. (*The Age of Jackson*).

Perhaps most notable of all are the scientists: Physicist John Bardeen, who shared a Nobel prize for perfecting the transistor; Astronomer James G. Baker, inventor of a satellite-tracking camera.