

Nov 2nd, 1970

Dear Mr Wilson:

I read, with some consternation, an account of the founding of the Krokedilæes in the current H.P.C. "Gazette". It was about as accurate as an historical treatise purporting to reveal the origins of the United States of America, which ^{might have} started by saying: "Tom Jefferson, George Washington, Ben Franklin and Tom Paine were sitting around the spinet one night after a reusing game of darts. "See here, boys," said George, "we've got to come up with a name for this here fledgling republic of ours before some scoundrel on the other side hangs a monicker on us like 'New U.K.', or 'Overseas West Riding of York'! At that moment, his eye happened to light upon a flattering portrait, (then much in vogue), of Christopher Colombuses' mother-in-law, Snza. Ameriga Vespucci. Quick as a Minuteman, he blurted it out: "America!" There ensued some discussion. Tom (J.) wanted to call it Monticello, while Ben held out for Steve, or next-best, Bifecaland. George won the day, you will be glad to know.

Lest this little story be lost on you, may it be known that I founded the Krokedilæes, and named them. In no way did this occur because a bunch of the boys were needling out a tune in the Pudding bar when one of them looked up and realized that he was being stared at by a stuffed crocodile.

When I was in the navy in 1944, I met a sailor who had gone to Yale, and who was an excellent tenor. He had a copy of the Yale Song Book with him, and, enlisting the help of two other sailors, we started a quartet which enjoyed some success. When we came back from the navy, and to our respective Universities, we continued our friendship. One time I went down to New Haven, and there dined for the first bgt by no means last time at Mory's. The Whiffenpoofs were there, enjoying their regular Monday night session of dining, singing, and sloshing down the delectable and potent "Green Cup". I was astounded at the high quality of their singing, and became a regular fan and something of a Harvard mascot to the Whiffs. From them, I learned a great deal about singing, and also how difficult it would be to start a group at Harvard, which had little or no tradition of small group singing, and no trained talent. Yale on the other hand had a vast "farm slub" system. There were something like 12 undergraduate singing groups in those days, all feeding into the Whiffs, which took the cream of the crop in senior year. Thus the Whiffenpoofs had close to a hundred young men to choose

from, not to mention others in the enormously professional and polished Yale Glee Club. They also had the help and encouragement of Marshall Bartholomew, the brilliant director of the Glee Club.

Nothing daunted, I set out to start something at Harvard. I enlisted my roommate, Arthur B. Nichols, '48, and Francis Cabot, and David Biddle, '49. Frank and David had sung in a quartet at Groton, and both had excellent voices. Art and I had been in an octet at Milton, and were experienced. We sang and rehearsed as a quartet for a year, mostly for our own pleasure. The next year we enlisted four more men, a musical director, and then four more^{success}. We decided to go into the Pudding show, (which in those days was a very elaborate affair with an extended itinerary, a rented train, a professional orchestra and director and choreographer), en masse, and we made up the bulk of the chorus. We decided, also that we must have a name. Since we felt that to guarantee our success we must become a permanent adjunct of the H.P.C., we should have a name that reflected some aspect of the Club. The secretary or treasurer, I can't remember which, of the Club used to be called "Krokodiles" in dim, dark classical days, so I picked that, and it was unanimously accepted by the rest of the group.

In those days, the University thought that we were some kind of subversive group. None of us were in the Glee Club, which made us musically "infra dig", and we had a healthy sprinkling of Cabots, Lodges, Lothropes, Biddles and Paines, not to mention the fact that every member was in both the Pudding and a final club which made us appear to be snobbish, which wasn't really true: in those days the only place that we could recruit experienced talent was from the ranks of prep-school boys who had done some training in school octets. At any rate, University Hall gave us short shrift. We weren't recognized as a legitimate entity, and the University in no way put our talents to use. Imagine my surprise and delight then, to learn from my father, Carl Binger, '10, that at his 60th reunion dinner last year at the Gardner Museum, it was the Kroks who provided the evening's entertainment. Imagine, also, my dismay, when my mother had to tell the head Krok how his organization came to be founded, and by whom.

Some enterprising member should find out who all the Kroks were, where they live, and perhaps get together a little book with

all the facts therein. I can certainly help you with the names of those members who were in the group during my undergraduate years. If you do have a reunion this autumn, it would, I am sure you will agree, ^{be a pity} to overlook any of those doughty souls who struggled so hard during its painful formative years to make the Krokodiles a permanent institution. I look forward to hearing from you re the above, and shall perhaps have the chance to get to the Pudding celebration on November 13th, where I will have a chance to hear the boys in action.

very sincerely

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