

# Sports versus studies already a concern back in 1905

Eyewitness accounts of the distant past life at Indiana University and in the community of Bloomington are not always easy to come by, but there are a few. In 1905, Amzi Atwater, a former professor at IU and pastor of the First Christian Church, sat down to put some recollections on paper. They were printed in the Bloomington *Evening World* during the spring of that year.

Atwater described the contrast between student life when he arrived in Bloomington in January of 1865 and that of 1905. In the first place, the classes were all male, since the university trustees did not admit females until Sarah Parke Morrison applied and was admitted in 1867.

Atwater implied that there were fewer distractions in those days and added, "The coming of the young ladies has made a great change. It has



## Looking back

By Rose McIlveen

developed the social element — a thing that may easily be carried too far if it has not already been so — and has naturally tended to greater polish of manners and refinement, drawing the young men away from the ruder and more outlandish sports and has brought them more and more to the social reception, the dance and the banquet."

The professor conceded that while that was a good thing, there were still problems. He asked, rhetorically, "Can you eliminate the evil and retain the good?"

Students (including the females)

had taken enthusiastically and sometimes boisterously to athletics. He observed that they talked about it during meals and in their rooms. Indeed, wrote Atwater, "... vigorous young men have mostly ceased to plot some base trick on the college or town authorities and are filled with an eager desire to outclass and overcome their opponents at home and their rivals abroad in physical force and skill."

Atwater implied that some of the students had failed to maintain a balance between extracurricular activities and their studies, an issue that has concerned each generation of educators at the university.

The professor must have been frowning when he wrote that the students yelled in chapel and while they were on Jordan Field and made it "... one of the chief things in university life. This also may be

overdone."

Even as he was writing, Atwater was well aware of what could happen at the other extreme. He recalled a particular student who also had a problem with balancing his time and energy while in school.

Atwater explained that interest in social functions and the athletic craze had "largely stopped the unhealthy bending over books for 18 hours of the 24 as Tilghman H. Mallow did who, though he won high scholarship, destroyed his own life in so doing."

Students today would have called Mallow a "nerd." He was no giddy teen-ager when he entered IU in 1867 at the age of 26, and the presence of Sarah Morrison or any other coeds who followed her to the university probably weren't a distraction to the single-minded young

man.

There is a short biographical sketch of Mallow in Theophilus Wylie's *Indiana University, Its History*. He apparently took the word "student" too seriously and neglected his physical side — perhaps not taking time out to eat and sleep properly and get some recreation.

His studies earned him the title of "adjunct professor of language and principal of the Preparatory Department." The following year he died of tuberculosis, a disease certainly caused by a germ, but no doubt aided in its destruction by the fatal imbalance of his life.

Concluded Atwater, "Athletics have no doubt provided a safety valve for the ebullition of youthful strength and enthusiasm. Again, can you retain the good and eliminate the evil?"