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He sells misogynistic ideas by the Seashore

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When they run out of dead white men to name buildings after, they begin naming new ones for guys who were still alive. Is a single UI building named for a woman? Sooner or later one will be, because every president — no matter how good, bad or mediocre — eventually is so honored.

But none has been yet. At least one building now commemorates a caricature of a male chauvinist pig, who left behind a trail of misogynist writings. Seashore, a psychology professor, was no closet woman-despiser. He promoted his views unabashedly in official university materials, academic journals and advice offered over decades from his dean's seat.

Seashore trumpeted his philosophy nationally through the Journal of Higher Education, proclaiming: "The real and wise intention of most normal women undertaking graduate work is to prepare for being happily married to a scholar and cultured man."

What conclusions can we draw from this Neanderthal claptrap? Perhaps not every president or other high-ranking university official is automatically worthy of joining the edifice-immortals. President Virgil Hancher, for example, by narrowly rejecting federal funds, was responsible for the fact that the UI had fewer resources than kindred institutions in the early post-World War II period — being the only major university without a library building until the early 1950s.

During World War II, as women did men's work while men went to war, Seashore declared vigorously that she was not going to be married. I then asked, "Do you really want to be an old maid?" That question stirred up trouble. She had been working against her deeper convictions and urges and set up an artificial goal.

Seashore did not, however, consider his denigrating influence on "career-minded women" as a "fundamental fact... that marriage is a career in itself, the most universal, the most laudable and the most desirable career for a normal woman."

Some might call these revelations cheap shots. Life moves on, and not even a genius can anticipate the enlightenment that hindsight bestows. But Seashore's writings show he was consciously engaged in a struggle against the women's liberationists of his day — and the week of International Women's Day seems an appropriate occasion to proceed with the exposé.

In one article, he observed: "Girls at the graduate-school level are often on a suffrage campaign, fighting for their sex, declaring against the violation of women's rights and prejudice against larger opportunities for women."

He went on to recall an exchange with one of these "bitter-end" women who aspired to a career, rejecting his suggestion that "a state of happy married life" was her preferred destiny. The "bitter-end" had declared vigorously that she was not going to be married. I then asked, "Do you really want to be an old maid? That question stirred up trouble. She had been working against her deeper convictions and urges and set up an artificial goal."

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