

THEODORE SIZER

Theodore Sizer was born in New York City on March 19, 1892, the first child of Robert Ryland and Mary (Thomsen) Sizer. After early schooling in the city, where he acquired the nickname "Tubby," he went to Pomfret School in Connecticut and received some extracurricular instruction in "drawing which gave me vastly more pleasure than organized athletics." He graduated there in 1911 and persuaded his father that, if he should let young Theodore travel around the world with a school friend, "I would do college in three years—a rash promise ultimately fulfilled." He found the trip a joy, and the Japanese part, he felt, had a profound influence throughout his long life.

The trip behind, he arrived at Harvard aged nearly twenty, and went out for the freshman football team. He stayed with it until Coach Percy Haughton told the players that if studies should interfere with football, drop the studies. At that point, young Sizer hung up his cleats and concentrated upon the serious study of fine arts. Chase, Post, Warner, Ross, Pope, and Murphy were for him inspirational and he graduated, as he had promised, in three years, and *cum laude* in the bargain. As for his extracurricular activities, he edited the *Lampoon*, joined the Massachusetts National Guard, and, the night before his oral exams and his departure from the College, he became engaged to Caroline Wheelwright Foster, whom he married on October 14, 1916.

From Cambridge he went to Muller, Schall & Co., an import-export house in New York, and remained until the United States entered the First World War. He joined the 27th Division as a private, was promoted to corporal on the strength of his years in the Guard, and soon made Sergeant. He then went for officer training, was commissioned, and,

because of his shipping experience, spent most of the war on the Philadelphia waterfront, loading transports for Europe. As a diversion from his bills of lading, he occasionally marched the troops he was drilling in Fairmount Park out of the park, "as a perfect captive audience, to the nearby art museum for instruction in the 'finer things of life'." After the Armistice, and after having done his part to make the world safe for democracy, he returned to New York, with occasional trips to Latin America for the firm, until fortuitously and happily he was appointed as curator of prints and of oriental art at the Cleveland Museum of Art in 1922. During his four years in Cleveland he and his growing family of girls went as often as possible to Europe. He took a year's leave from the Museum and from Adelbert College of Western Reserve University, where he had taught, in order to study in Florence. It was while there that he received the call from Yale and his appointment "was finally settled with the dean over two bottles of excellent wine at the Café de la Régence in Paris."

New Haven meant another double-barreled appointment, associate director of the University Art Gallery and associate professor of the history of art. He combined winters teaching with summers traveling and found both quite rewarding. Among his other activities was the directorship of the WPA Art Project for the southern part of Connecticut, a job of which he wrote last year, "I am proud today of the lasting work accomplished." Other diversions were wine making, cookbook collecting, writing articles and reviews, mountain climbing, and raising his family of five daughters and one son.

The coming of the Second World War shattered the quietude of academic life for Sizer, and, drawing upon his having been in the South Pacific the year before Pearl Harbor, he volunteered for intelligence work in the Air

Corps. His desk job there did not last long before he was dragooned into the Monuments, Fine Arts, and Archives section of Military Government, to serve primarily in Italy and in England, while awaiting D-Day. At the age of fifty-two and with his health having been left in Italy, he was given a medical discharge in 1944, but not before having been promoted to lieutenant-colonel and having been awarded the Order of the Crown of Italy, *commendatore*.

After months in military hospitals, he finally arrived back at Yale. Due to the press of medical advice, he soon had to retire from the Gallery and limit himself to teaching small classes. A Sabbatical year and other fugitive moments he devoted to writing and heraldry before becoming professor *emeritus* in 1957. His seventieth birthday was celebrated by colleagues, students, and friends with an exhibition at the Gallery, "Fifty Years of Creative Work." They also had published a bibliography of his works, chief among the one hundred and sixty-four items of which were his biography and studies of John Trumbull, his history of the American Academy of Fine Arts, and his editing of the Autobiography of Colonel John Trumbull. Also in 1962 he was awarded the Yale Medal and was appointed "Pursuivant of Arms of Yale University." This position was created in order to recognize his having designed banners, seals, and other regalia for the ten Yale colleges, and other heraldic work for the University. Yale had earlier given him an honorary degree, and he was a fellow of Davenport College. In the face of these and many more honors, he wrote that "my greatest satisfaction, my chief joy and pride, is neither art nor scholarship, but grandchildren."

His relationship with this Society was long, happy, and productive. It began in earnest even before his election to membership when he was doing the research for his biography of Colonel Trumbull. He wrote Mr. Brigham to say

that he would soon be at the library Trumbulling. On the biography and the autobiography he spent time here, and was always glad when the pressures of academic work allowed him to attend our meetings. His letters were occasionally signed, not with a signature or initials, but with a self-caricature; round-faced, handlebar-mustachioed, scatter-haired, and beaming goodwill.

One of his many interests was hooking rugs and he made over a hundred. One he called his "death rug," for he had woven into it "all the things they will want to know when I die"—the names of his six children, his army serial number, Social Security number, and the number of his safe deposit box. The rug became more than a conversation piece on June 21, 1967, when Theodore Sizer died at the Veterans Hospital in West Haven at the age of seventy-five. He leaves his wife, five daughters and one son, now the Dean of the School of Education at Harvard, twenty-seven grandchildren, and six great-grandchildren. He will be sorely missed by all who knew him.

J. E. M.

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