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THE COVER: More than 2,000 students from OU and OSU gathered at the State Capitol on April 26 in a demonstration labeled a "Study-In" to show their concern over the plight of higher education in their state.

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Sooner Scene

by R. Boyd Gunning

When he walked into the room I liked him, and as he talked about football I knew he was my choice for the job." This was the reaction of Horace K. Calvert when Jim Mackenzie appeared before the Regents of the University for his interview 16 months ago. I soon learned that it was not unusual for people promptly to like and accept this energetic enthusiast, whose charming, breezy style was so infectious. In the weeks immediately following his appointment as head football coach at OU Jim Mackenzie appeared before hundreds of Sooner alumni in eight regional alumni meetings, and he immediately captured the imagination and support of all who met him. In one swift tour he was accepted as a member of the Sooner family and imbued by the Sooner spirit.

Jim Mackenzie died of a heart attack in the early morning of Friday, April 28th. He was engaged in spring practice and recruiting, and because of the great pressure of his position and the demands upon his energies, he chose to ignore several warning symptoms of a heart condition until after spring practice was completed. His sudden death was a shocking, tragic blow to the entire campus and to all who knew him.

The people of Norman seemed to be in a state of shock for two days. Fred Tarmen, publisher and editor of the Norman Transcript, who has lived in Norman for nearly 60 years wrote: "In all my years nothing has affected the University and this community quite like this. Jim was loved by hundreds of friends and admired and respected by everyone. He was a friendly person, a fine Christian gentleman, and an outstanding football coach. His loss is a great tragedy for all of us."

Dr. George L. Cross said of him: "Everyone at the University of Oklahoma is deeply grieved by Jim Mackenzie's death. Seldom in the history of the University has a young man made so great a contribution in such a short period of time. His interest transcended athletics and embraced the aspirations of the University. It was characteristic of Jim that he should work too hard to achieve the goals he set for himself. We owe a great debt of gratitude to this young man whose energies were given in full measure to the improvement of the University. Jim's fine character and warm personality earned the respect and love of all who knew him. We were fortunate to have him as a member of our faculty and extend our sincere sympathy to his family." Bud Wilkinson, returning home for the funeral, said: "Jim's death is a tragic loss to OU football and to the world of college athletics. He was a young man of rare talent and integrity whose spirit will remain a part of Sooner tradition." Many famous coaches attended Jim's funeral in respect to his memory. These men who knew him best alluded to the outstanding qualities of character that made him so many friends and raised him to such a distinguished career in the world of athletics.

The sports writers liked him and trusted him, and Jim reciprocated by always taking time to answer their questions fully and candidly. His TV show was also a great success. Here is the way Bill Connors, sports editor of the Tulsa World, described him: "He seemed to tip-toe precariously through the hectic and final years of his life. He was forever surrounded by flocks of people, precious success, and untold pressures; yet he moved through his perilous jungle at a relatively slow pace. The uninhibited and simple qualities of Mackenzie made him compatible, even popular, with any group anywhere. Mackenzie frequently described himself as 'just a country boy,' but really he wasn't. He was Middletown, America, born and raised in the Midwest (Gary, Ind.), educated in the South (University of Kentucky), and a resident professional of the Southwest. His accent was mostly Gary with a trace of Fayetteville, Ark. Except for the polish and maturity he acquired during a nine-year apprenticeship under Frank Broyles, the 1967 Mackenzie was basically unchanged from the fellow who was struggling on \$3,600 a year at Allen Academy (Tex.) (Continued on page 32)

On May 2 Assistant Coach Chuck Fairbanks was named to succeed the late Jim Mackenzie.

Sooner Scene Continued

as coach in 1956. An old acquaintance would have had no trouble recognizing him. That wonderfully warm, folksy style, the hearty laugh, and inquisitive nature were the same." Nick Seitz, sports editor of the Oklahoma Journal, wrote about his sense of humor and his ability to laugh at himself. Nick admired his hard driving ways and wrote: "His chosen profession is as challenging as any. A modern football coach must be an administrator, teacher, public speaker, forceful enough to inspire fanatical devotion (Mackenzie was especially successful in this connection), super-salesman with the alumni, and above all a big winner." Volney Meece, veteran sports writer of the Oklahoma City Times, introduced Jim to Oklahoma sports fans when he was first appointed while he was still assistant coach at Arkansas preparing for the Cotton Bowl game. Volney was captivated by his "grinning, boyish, and down-to-earth charm." He referred to the fact that one of Jim's strong points was his ability to be natural both in public as well as in private company.

Frank Boggs, sports columnist of the Daily Oklahoman, wrote of Jim's ability "to find the time to take the time that was necessary to get a job done." He said, "Sports writers respect coaches because we know how hard they work, how hard they try, how hard they hope. We did more than respect this one, we trusted him. We could joke with him, he would joke with us. He was awfully good at it, too. . . . On the Monday after the Sooner victory over Texas last year while the rest of the State of Oklahoma was looking for another street to dance in, the usual noon press conference was held in the Student Union at Norman. The Sooners were to play Kansas the next Saturday and a football coach cannot afford to look behind. 'That is the bad thing about athletics,' Jim said at noon, 'there is too little time to enjoy a victory.'"

There was too little time for Jim Mackenzie. All of us will remember him always as a part of the Sooner tradition. *END*

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