

George Lynn Cross and OU:

Robert E. Fields Jr.



An Enriching Association



The statistical accretion of the administration of George L. Cross is enough to give one pause: the senior state university president in the United States, he served the University of Oklahoma as its President longer than any of his six predecessors; more than half the degrees in the history of the institution have been granted during his twenty-five-year term, including eighty percent of the PhDs; the student body has increased more than four-fold to an enrollment of over 17,000; the value of the physical plant has grown from \$10 million to more than \$80 million; today there are more than 7,000 University housing spaces for single students and more than 900 spaces for married couples as compared with 250 spaces in 1943 in Hester-Robertson Hall; median salary for faculty members has grown from \$2,450 to almost \$11,000; the total budget has increased from \$2.8 million in 1943 to almost \$20 million in 1967-68; there have been more than thirty building projects for housing, classrooms, and recreation facilities; private gifts and grants have burgeoned from almost nothing to the seven-figure level; new departments and new programs have been created; research and research facilities have been greatly increased; the Bizzell Library has passed the million-book milestone. More important, however, than all the facts and figures, which testify so dramatically to the achievements of the Cross years, have been the intangibles of his leadership. Under George Lynn Cross, the University of Oklahoma has grown spiritually as well as physically. The character of a university is determined by its president more than by any other factor, and in this respect the University of Oklahoma has been fortunate. A man of integrity, prudence, high principles and standards, patience, wit, and intellect, George L. Cross has imparted these qualities to his institution and given it a purpose and a sense of direction which have kept it moving forward in its pursuit of excellence. The Cross years have come to an end, but the Cross influence will continue. George Cross helped to create a university with a climate of respect for academic freedom, reason and tolerance and intellect and humanness—the sort of things which are not easily measured but which are essential to a center of learning. It's an invaluable legacy of which Oklahomans should be both proud and protective. For the University of Oklahoma and George L. Cross, it's been a most enriching association.

In commemoration of their twenty-five years in the President's Home, a collage of newspaper and magazine articles and photographs of people and events figuring in the Cross years was presented to President and Mrs. Cross by their friend Robert Rucker during Dr. Cross' last week as President. The photograph at left was taken at the presentation in the Oklahoma Memorial Union.