



By Connie Burke Ruggles

Photography by Don Burk

The Man from Drake

PAUL FREDERICK SHARP

3

The official announcement that Dr. Paul Frederick Sharp, president of Drake University, Des Moines, would become OU'S ninth president came at a special meeting of the Board of Regents on the morning of April 20.

It was hardly a surprise. In the way that things of that nature have, the news had broken simultaneously in Des Moines and Oklahoma City the previous Thursday.

Before the story became public, facetious rumors had begun to circulate that the presidential selection committee didn't really exist. Seldom had any committee worked for so long with so few rumors floating from its labors.

Then a few weeks prior to the announcement rumors began coming almost faster than people could keep track of them. When at last the story broke, news reports agreed that Sharp would be president and that he was one of three people the committee and the regents had considered seriously — the other two being James A. Robinson, 38, an OU alumnus and now provost at Ohio State University, and Irvin G. Wyllie, 51, chancellor of the University of Wisconsin Parkside campus.

It was already known that Sharp had been to the campus to meet with key people and had visited with Oklahoma Governor David Hall.

So the April 20 announcement was not a surprise but rather a logical culmination of events.

Sharp himself congratulated newsmen on their ability to ferret out information he had thought was private.

The new president won't take over his new position until August 16 when he officially assumes the post at a salary of \$40,000 per year plus use of the president's home at the corner of Lindsey and Pickard, use of a car, a household operation allowance of \$7,500 and the standard fringe benefits.

Sharp appears tailor made for the criteria set down by the committee and the regents in November. He is personable, has all the proper academic credentials, has been head of a college or university for the past 15 years, is in the "30 to 60" age range, has a wife and grown children, and has a reputation as a good fund raiser. He also has strong Oklahoma ties. He was born in Missouri, received a bachelor's degree from Phillips University in Enid, married Rosella Ann Anderson, whose mother (Mrs. W. T. Andy Anderson) still lives in Enid. His grandparents made the run of 1889, and his mother taught school in Oklahoma before statehood.

At 53, Sharp has been president of Drake since 1966 when he left the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill where he was chancellor for two years. He holds a doctorate from the University of Minnesota and has been on the history faculties of Iowa State University and the University of Wisconsin.

(Continued on inside back cover)



The Man from Drake

(Continued from page 3)

From 1957 to 1964 he was president of Hiram College, a private church related school in Ohio.

An American historian with a number of publications to his credit, Sharp is particularly interested in the impact of agriculture on the growth of the nation. He has received the Silver Spur award of the Western Writers of America and has been a Fulbright Lecturer in Australia and a Ford Faculty Fellow and a Guggenheim Fellow. He has long been active in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

Mrs. Sharp, who says her first duty is to her family and her second to the institution her husband serves, is slim, fair skinned and attractive with red-blond hair. Their children, all grown, are William, an assistant professor of history at Temple University, Philadelphia; Kathryn (Mrs. Baillie Dunlap), Chapel Hill, North Carolina, and Paul Trevor, a high school teacher in Lenoir, North Carolina.

At the press conference that followed his formal appointment, Sharp handled himself well before some 40 newspaper, television and radio news men. He answered all the questions, frankly admitting when he felt unable to comment on specifics related to the University and its inner workings.

In many respects such meetings are unfair, both to the new man who hasn't had a chance to learn about his new job and to the media and their public who must somehow make a judgment with little to base it on.

But Sharp did have things to say about OU and higher education as a whole:

"The University is a very special thing in our society . . . and it is a special challenge to be a university president in these days.

"The University of Oklahoma is one of the great leaders not only in education but in the state of Oklahoma . . . We have a great deal to do as a university in our society, and I feel very proud to be a part of meeting that challenge."

Among the factors in making his decision to take the OU job he listed "optimism of this state . . . the base of concern for education . . . the people who talk about capabilities rather than inabilities . . . the quality of the people . . . the fact that OU is one of the most promising universities in the United States . . . my own commitment to Oklahoma."

Certainly Sharp was sensitive to the fact that there were political overtones to the departure of his predecessor. While disavowing any knowledge of what J. Herbert Hollomon was like as a president, Sharp freely admitted he had not made his final decision on the OU offer until after he talked to Oklahoma's governor, who, Sharp said, assured him he had no intention of interfering in the life of the University.

On dealing with student problems Sharp said, "Students are the major constituents in a university . . . to a considerable degree they are the life of the university . . . but that does not mean we should bypass the work of others."

On fund raising he said, "State universities cannot be as strong as they must be unless the private sector moves in and helps us . . . the private sector has a genuine responsibility to higher education."

After a luncheon with key University people, a public reception and a few small brief meetings with a variety of people, the Sharps went back to Des Moines, where Drake University now begins the task the University of Oklahoma has just completed — searching for a president.