

Professors, Presidents, Politicians

George Lynn Cross has done it again. After dealing with the thorny questions of desegregation, big-time football and World War II in his first three books about the University, he has chosen OU and civil rights for the fourth.

There should be an official licensing agency for memoir writers. To obtain permission to reminisce, a prospective author would be required to possess an excellent memory, remarkable candor, a sense of humor and considerable writing ability. An applicant's case would be helped by having lived a long life, full of fascinating experiences, challenging dilemmas and colorful associates. Under this system, George Lynn Cross would be fully licensed and qualified. However, after rejecting its approval, he probably would set about systematically dismantling such an arbitrary agency. George Cross has been in the civil rights business for a long time.

The proof lies in his fourth — and perhaps his best — book on the institution he served as president for 25 years. In *Professors, Presidents and Politicians: Civil Rights and the University of Oklahoma 1890-1968*, Cross omits nothing — monumental battles with territorial and statehood legislatures, political hirings and firings, black lists, red hunts, loyalty oaths, desegregation, academic freedom, censure.

The focus of this book is not on the issues, however, but rather on the people who had to deal with these issues. Cross handles both issues and people with disarming frankness. The cast of characters from state and OU history is complete — governors, senators, legislators, power brokers, regents, deans, professors, students, alumni.

Fortunately, Cross writes the way he talks, calmly, methodically, with unexpected flashes of the dry humor that is his trademark. He is candid but kind.

One of the most charming anecdotes in the book is tucked away in the appendices. "The Dora Legend" deals with an extraordinary professor of Romance languages, Lucile Dora, who figures in several incidents in Cross' account of early OU:



Professor Lucile Dora, in her self-styled golden yellow academic regalia, qualified as one of the University's authentic "characters" for 50 years.

"During her more than two decades of service at OU, Professor Dora became perhaps the most picturesque "character" to serve the university during its first half century. She developed a number of peculiar, though on the whole endearing characteristics. She always carried a green parasol, which became the symbol of her presence on the campus. Because of her dubious academic origin, she designed and apparently made her own cap and gown to be worn at Commencement and at other functions where academic costume was suitable. Her mortar board, hood, and robe were golden yellow. For many years she was most impressive marching near the head of the line in academic processions.

"A more frequently observed eccentricity was her practice of taking all that her plate would hold at a meal, whether at a private home, a fraternity or sorority house, or at a campus function. She would eat

from the plate until she was satisfied, fold what was left in a napkin, and place it in her handbag to be eaten at a later meal.

"In spite of all this, Professor Dora was a charming woman who made and held the friendships of many."

Sooner Magazine is grateful to the author and the publisher, the University of Oklahoma Press, for permission to reprint on the following pages one of the lighter chapters from *Professors, Presidents and Politicians*. This chapter should prove for all time that life in the ivory tower need not be dull.

—CAROL J. BURR

The University of Oklahoma Press, 1005 Asp, Norman, OK 73019, is accepting pre-publication orders for Professors, Presidents and Politicians, delivery expected in November. The 352-page book, with 78 illustrations, is priced at \$17.95.

Cross Book Excerpt on Following Pages

From Professors, Presidents, and Politicians

During the following months, I was to become increasingly aware of the need for policies covering the civil rights of university students and nonacademic personnel, as well as of the faculty. We were at war with Japan, and large numbers of naturalized United States citizens of Japanese origin had been confined in internment camps for the duration of the war or until they could be cleared by the FBI. Many others, of more distant Japanese ancestry, were suspect also and confined to the camps. Many of the younger citizens of Japanese descent, however, were unconfined, and a few of them applied for admission to the University of Oklahoma. Dean Roy Gittinger, of the Office of Admissions and Records, raised the question whether they should be admitted. It appeared to me that all United States citizens should have the right of admission to the university, but I thought it wise to ask the regents to establish a policy. I raised the question at a meeting of the board in August, 1944. After a brief discus-

sion Regent William R. Wallace moved

That the University of Oklahoma accept Japanese-American citizens on the same basis as other citizens recognized under the constitution and laws of the United States and the constitution and laws of the state of Oklahoma, provided their status as loyal citizens has been certified by the FBI.¹

Wallace's motion passed unanimously, but I had an uncomfortable feeling that the civil rights of these potential students were being violated to some extent by the requirement that they must be certified as "loyal citizens" by the FBI. Progress in such matters is made slowly.

During my seven-month term as acting president I recalled from time to time the regents' request at my initial meeting with them in January, 1943, that I check the tenure policy at the university, especially the proce-

Professors, Presidents, and Politicians (Chapter 17: "Other Civil Rights Issues" Reprinted by permission of the University of Oklahoma Press. Copyright 1981. Photos: OU Western History Collections and Office of University Regents.

Board of Regents, 1945-46, left to right, (seated) President G. L. Cross, E. C. Hopper, William R. Wallace, Regents' Secretary Emil R. Kraettli; (standing) Erl Deacon, Joe McBride, Ned Shepler, Don Emery, Lloyd Noble.

¹University of Oklahoma, Minutes of Meetings of the Board of Regents, meeting of August, 1944.



ture for placing faculty members on permanent tenure. Although in making the request the board implied that it expected a recommendation from me, I did not give serious attention to the problem during my acting presidency, because I thought the person named to the presidency might want to have a voice in establishing that important institutional policy.

After I was given the appointment, I realized that I should make a report to the regents as soon as possible. With the help of the faculty senate I drafted a proposed policy and submitted it to the board on April 11, 1945. Briefly stated, the policy included the following provisions:

1. Instructors were not eligible for tenure.
2. Those holding the rank of assistant professor or associate professor should be considered for tenure after a probationary period of three years.
3. Individuals appointed as full professors should be considered for tenure after a probationary period of two years.
4. In all cases tenure should come only by specific action of the board.
5. The probationary period might be extended, but the status of each individual being considered for tenure should be made known to him or her before May 1 of the final probationary year.
6. In the event that tenure was denied, and the probationary period was not extended, the individual would retain faculty status until the end of the following academic year.

After only brief discussion the board unanimously approved the policy.

During the summer of 1945 I was abruptly confronted with the dismissal of a nonacademic employee, which I perhaps handled a bit too casually. An assistant who had worked for a number of years in the Public Information Department of the Extension Division was reappointed for the year beginning July 1, 1945, at a salary of \$1,500 for twelve months. A mimeographed notice of her appointment was sent to her in duplicate with the request that she sign one copy and return it if she desired to accept the appointment under the conditions indicated. This was the usual procedure

with nonacademic personnel. A few days later she returned a mimeographed sheet, signed, providing for an annual salary of \$2,100. After being questioned at length by Roscoe Cate, assistant to the president for finance, she finally admitted that she had cut a new stencil, filled in the revised salary amount, and returned it through the on-campus mail. After discussing the matter with Cate, I notified her that her services would be terminated effective September 1, 1945.

At the next meeting of the regents the board's president, Regent E. C. Hopper, Jr., reported that the discharged employee had asked for a hearing before the board with her attorney, William Cole, of Oklahoma City. Hopper asked me to explain the situation before the regents made a decision about her request. Upon hearing my report, the regents took the following action:

Since it has been the long-standing policy of the board of regents, and this policy is hereby affirmed, all employees of the university who are not

on tenure shall be subject to discharge by the president of the university without consideration of the board of regents.²

Hopper then called the employee and read the statement. This was the first that I had heard of a policy on the discharge of non-tenured personnel, and I realized that the policy was not a good one. Anyone should have the privilege of appealing the president's decision to the board with counsel, regardless of how clearcut the case might appear to the president. I suggested this to the board, but the members did not see fit to make a change in the policy.

Several questions pertaining to individual rights were brought to my attention during the fall of 1945. Soon after the beginning of the fall semester, A. B. Adams, dean of the College of Business Administration, came to my office to discuss restrictions the board had placed on the activities of members of the university administration. Two years before, in the sum-

²Ibid., meeting of August, 1945.



The political aspirations of Dean Arthur B. Adams of the College of Business Administration presented President Cross with something of a dilemma as he tried to balance the right of a faculty member, as an individual citizen, to run for public office with the best interests of the University which employed him.

mer of 1943, it had been rumored that Adams was planning to run for a seat in the United States Senate. When questioned by representatives of the press, he had admitted that that might be a possibility. News stories about his admission disturbed some of the regents, and at their September meeting the president of the board called for an executive session. Following this private conference the board announced that the following resolution had been unanimously adopted:

Believing it to be for the best interest of the University of Oklahoma, it is hereby resolved by the board of regents that any member of the faculty or any employee of the university, who becomes a candidate in any primary or general election for any county, state or federal office, said faculty member or employee, announcing his candidacy for any of said offices shall first offer his resignation to the board of regents, without reservations.³

³Ibid., meeting of September, 1945.

Adams protested, perhaps with justification, that this action had been a violation of his constitutional rights. He asked my help in getting the action rescinded. I told him that, while I might be able to support a policy that would permit an employee of the university to take a leave of absence without pay to run for public office, I could not favor a plan that would permit an employee to enter a race and campaign while on active service with the university. Such activities would be incompatible and certainly not in the best interest of the university. After further discussion Adams said that he was inclined to agree and that perhaps sometime in the future he would ask for a leave of absence to run for the Senate. I hastily assured him that I could not guarantee that the regents would respond favorably to such a request but that I was willing to recommend approval of a policy that would permit it. Nothing further came of the matter; the regulation that an employee of the university must resign from the university before becoming a candidate for a

major public office is still in effect at this writing, though members of the faculty hold Norman city offices from time to time.

Two incidents — the first in Joseph A. Brandt's administration, the second in mine — certainly were related to the question of civil rights: freedom of expression in public and personal behavior at home. Both incidents involved members of a department in the College of Arts and Sciences under Dean Edgar D. Meacham's general supervision. To preserve anonymity the first, who was chairman of his department, will be designated Professor X; the other will be designated Professor Z. Both men were relatively young, with what many regard as rather advanced ideas of university life and personal behavior. They were proficient and respected by others in their academic discipline, but many in the somewhat sedate academic community took a dim view of their seeming aberrational behavior on social occasions. One who disapproved strongly was Dean Meacham.

Professor X was brought to the attention of President Brandt's office in the fall of 1942. It was generally known that he enjoyed alcoholic beverages, and, while he was never to my knowledge accused of drinking to inebriation, it did appear that he got maximum effect from what he had consumed. Most of his faculty associates were more amused by than critical of his antics, and some expressed curiosity about his source of supply in dry Oklahoma. Dean Meacham, understandably, considered his behavior not in the best interests of the University of Oklahoma, and, I was told, discussed it with him on one or more occasions. Far from having the desired effect, these talks merely caused Professor X to become more innovative in behavior after he had had a drink or two.

Professor X was the proud owner of a late-model Packard coupé in which he had installed amplifying equip-

Dean Edgar Meacham, left, in his office in 1945, had more than his share of problems with free-spirited faculty members, the infamous "X" and "Z."



ment. He could drive about town making comments that could be heard for varying distances, depending on how he set the rheostat; it was reported that his maximum range was perhaps three or four blocks.

After a talk with Meacham, during which he was reportedly admonished to improve his behavior, he decided to reciprocate by giving the dean admonitory advice through the loud-speaker system in his automobile. He would drive slowly along Lindsey Street between Elm and Flood streets and, with his equipment at full power, enumerate the dean's undesirable characteristics for the benefit of the neighborhood. As the Packard passed the Meacham residence, specific suggestions concerning what the dean should do were given in language allegedly sometimes bordering on the indecent. While these sorties were infrequent, they brought considerable distress to the dean.

The dean was at a loss to know what to do. After one occurrence, he visited my office (I was then acting dean of the graduate college) to discuss possible solutions. He did not want to bring charges of disturbing the peace against Professor X, for that could bring only unfavorable publicity, and it would be doubtful that the charges would be taken seriously unless his neighbors joined him in making them. I told Meacham that I would talk with Professor X, with whom I was on friendly terms, and see what I could do to dissuade him from similar future activity. When I talked with the offender, he was inclined to agree that the principle of freedom of speech must be stretched untenably to cover his behavior. He was, however, inclined to think that he might want to tease the dean a bit before ending the project. I heard nothing more about that particular problem, but later in the fall Professor X was accused of making sexual advances to a part-time secretary. President Brandt requested and received his resignation effective at the end of the school year.

Professor Z's lifestyle was similar in many respects to that of Professor X. He was a tall, handsome, strongly built individual with a genial personality, but his mannerisms were a bit

flamboyant for that particular period in the university's development. Like his former associate in the department, he was fond of alcoholic beverages, and he was defiant of what he considered unwarranted authority. He took the position that, as long as he performed his duties for the university in satisfactory manner, his behavior on the campus and off was his own affair, not subject to interference by others. He was well liked by his colleagues, but admittedly many Oklahomans would have disapproved of him as a teacher of their children. This worried Dean Meacham, and, I must admit, it caused me some concern. One day the dean frankly ad-



President Cross, left, and Dean Roy Gittinger appear on OU's radio station.

mitted to me that he would like to get rid of Professor Z. It appeared that there might be an opportunity to do so in the early fall of 1945.

Professor Z's next-door neighbor was an English professor, a strait-laced individual who was quite shocked by what he frequently observed on his neighbor's premises. He talked with Dean Meacham about it, and from the discussion certain charges emerged that were attested to by the English professor and sent to my office with the recommendation that Professor Z's tenure at the university be terminated at the end of the 1945-46 session. The charges were enumerated as follows:

1. Professor Z and his wife frequently appeared in their backyard in the scantiest possible attire, each wearing only a pair of shorts.

2. Professor Z and his wife frequently used profanity in their backyard—easily heard by the neighbors.

3. Professor Z and his wife were known to use alcoholic beverages on many occasions in the backyard and in their home — easily observed through the windows of the house.

4. On more than one occasion Professor Z and his wife were seen having sexual intercourse on the dining-room table with window shades not drawn.

Much impressed by all of this, I called Professor Z to my office and told him of the charges. I told him also that it would be necessary for me to transmit the charges and the dean's recommendation to the regents but that he was entitled to appear before the board, with counsel, to answer the

charges. He indicated to me that he would indeed want to have a hearing, and few days later, he notified me that he would have as his counsel William Cole, an Oklahoma City attorney.

Professor Z and Cole appeared before the regents at their next meeting and spent an hour or two in executive session with them. When they left, the regents faced the question of what should be done.

After groping about for several minutes, during which it became apparent that it would be difficult to find adequate grounds for dismissal — no charges of incompetence, no felonious behavior, no immorality, and no suggestion of treasonable behavior — Regent Don Emery summarized the situation in classic fashion, in effect as follows:

1. Professor Z is accused of wearing shorts in his backyard. If this be con-

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sidered a criterion, I suspect that several of us could not qualify for membership on the university's governing board.

2. Professor Z is charged also with using profanity in his backyard. Who, among us, has not used profanity in his backyard on one occasion or another?

3. Professor Z is further charged with using alcoholic beverages in his home and on his premises. I suspect that a majority of this board is not qualified to pass adverse judgment on such a charge.

4. And finally, Professor Z is charged with having sexual intercourse with his wife in his home. If this is improper behavior for any man, what is proper? I move that the charges against Professor Z be dismissed.

Regent Erl Deacon seconded the motion with the comment, "I'm skeptical of the fourth charge anyway. I don't see how he could get any traction on a dining-room table." Following a burst of laughter the board passed the motion unanimously.

The next day I had a visit with Professor Z and told him essentially what had happened after he and his attorney had left the regents' meeting. But I did tell him also that, while no pressure was implied, I thought he was a bit ahead of his time as a member of the faculty of the University of Oklahoma and that, considering the mores of Oklahomans probably both he and the university would be better off if he could find employment elsewhere.

At a meeting of the board on December 12, 1945, Regent Emery reported that he had received a copy of a letter of resignation from Professor Z that he had sent to William Cole, his attorney. After discussion Regent Emery moved that "the president of the University of Oklahoma be authorized to accept with reluctance the resignation of Professor Z . . . if and when the resignation is presented to the president."⁴

Professor Z's resignation came to the president's office a few days later. He had accepted a much more lucrative position in Washington, D.C., doubtless a more congenial setting.

⁴Ibid., meeting of December 12, 1945, p. 1935.

ricia McBride and Jean-Pierre Bonnefous who danced a benefit performance of "The Nutcracker" in 1976. Donn Edwards, who began his studies at OU and is now a principal dancer with the Boston Ballet, created the role of Prince Ivan in Terekhov's world premiere two-act ballet of "The Firebird" in 1980.

The Terekhov daughters themselves, who once were thought to be carrying on the "family business," have turned in their toe shoes. Occasionally seen in OU and Oklahoma City Civic Ballet productions, they reached the crucial stage in their early teens when they had to decide to point toward careers and give up everything else, or to live a more normal life.

"It almost broke my heart when Lisa decided she would rather be a cheerleader."

"It was hard when the girls got older and decided to give up ballet," Miss Chouteau recalled. "They were beautiful dancers and had distinctly different gifts. It almost broke my heart when Lisa decided she would rather be a cheerleader, but I gave her the choice. I have seen what happens when mothers push daughters who don't want careers."

Terekhov also betrays a parental attitude as he talks about the joy and pain of watching his students grow for four years and then leave.

"Every year there is something about each group of students which sparks the desire to teach," he says. "Every year it is a different challenge to choreograph for them. We lose some students, and the new ones influence the old ones, so the mixture is always changing."

Seated behind his desk in the Fine Arts Center, peering through reading glasses at a clutter of schedules, grade sheets and an appointment calendar, he looks the stereotypical faculty member until he rises to his 6-foot-2-inch height. Trimmed by tennis now, he still is a commanding physical presence.

Gone are the days when he knew so

little about university life that he was granted tenure without realizing its significance. His teaching has earned the Standard Oil (Indiana) Foundation superior teaching award in 1967 the OU regents award in 1968, and listings in the Outstanding Educators of America since 1971.

Twenty years in Oklahoma have not erased Terekhov's Spanish accent, just as 20 years away did not destroy Miss Chouteau's soft "Okie" inflections. He jokingly apologizes for his often illegible handwriting with the comment that "even my writing has an accent!"

"I was invited to teach a few classes here, and before I knew it, 20 years had gone by," Terekhov said. "Yvonne and I did things because we had to do them. We never could have gotten this far without George Cross.

"Subtle and not-so-subtle offers from major departments across the country keep coming in, but I never have had time to think about them. I still am in the process of building. This has been a quest. Ballet is my heritage. (Terekhov's aunt and father were both ballet dancers in Odessa, Russia, before Miguel, Sr., set off to see the world and wound up as a cigarette wholesaler in Montevideo.) My tradition reaches back to Saint Petersburg."

"One of my students is teaching in the New York City High School of Performing Arts (scene of the movie 'Fame')," Terekhov continued. "Bobby Heath, who is also in the hit 'Sugar Babies,' has asked me to teach master classes whenever I visit New York City. And he's told me not to worry — the students are being trained in my tradition and to my standards. When he choreographs for students at their end-of-the-year performances, he draws on the repertoire he learned at OU."

So, the aspiring dancers from "Fame's" high school are touched with Oklahoma's dance fame. And some may be coming on to Oklahoma to continue their dance studies, as students have come from across the country and as far away as Australia and South Africa.

And Terekhov continues his quest.

"I never planned to be doing what I am doing," he said, "but perhaps it is why I was born."