

## Sooner Story Brings Back Memories of Prof. Paxton

I am four years late in reading *The Sooner Story*, but I do want to salute Carolyn Hart and Charles Long for giving us a fine history of our beloved University of Oklahoma. Some very dear friends of mine, who still reside in Norman, gave me the book as a house present only a month ago. As an alumna and a professor's daughter, I want to discuss some contributions to OU made by my father and mother.

Are you now assembling more data for a book to be called, *One Hundred Years at the University of Oklahoma*? If so, maybe these thoughts would be of interest to you.

As early as 1921, my father, Joseph Francis Paxton, started collecting, evaluating, and editing the best poetry written by OU students and faculty members. In that year, 1921, the University Press published the first Anthology, then another in 1924 and 1929.

Since I was a coed from 1925-29, I had a chance to read many of the poems my father had on his desk. Many of the writers came to visit at our home to consult with Dad, among them Muna Lee, John McClure, Betty Kirk and others I'll mention later.

I believe that Prof. Paxton was a great inspiration to many aspiring young writers, some of whom had never had any of their works reviewed or published.

Lynn Riggs, author of "Green Grow the Lilacs," is one example. As all of us from the Sooner state know, this work became the musical and movie gem, "Oklahoma!" One has only to read Lynn's lovely poem, "Beauty Is Gone," in the 1924 Anthology to realize his budding talent.

Other contributors to the anthologies who became well-known in the literary world were Zoe Tilghman, Mary Carmack McDougal, Louisa Brooks, W. S. Campbell (Stanley Vestal), B. A. Botkin and May Frank. My father was in close touch with all these writers. There was a good meeting of minds shared with them.

Though JFP wrote many verses with World War I themes, my own favorites are "The Optimist" and "To a Pessimist." Before he died, I gathered up all the verses from the anthologies

and had them bound into a special book which I presented to him. The book is now on my own library shelf.

The fact that my mother, Fantine Samuels Paxton, was the first woman to graduate from OU and was so honored September 27, 1941, at a campus ceremony, is justly worthy of notice. The ceremony was prepared by Joseph A. Brandt, president, and attended by W. B. Bizzell, president emeritus. *The New York Times* printed the story — I have most of the original clipping. My mother made us all proud when she spoke at that well-publicized student matriculation program. She spoke briefly about college life in 1903.

My sister and I believe that our father helped to design the great seal of the state of Oklahoma. Both of us remember this being discussed — especially the choice of a motto which turned out to be *Civi et Reipublicae*. Yes, my older sister, Adelaide Paxton McCrimmon, admired the design of the seal so much that she embroidered a pillow for me featuring red and white for the circle of the seal, and a sower of wheat dressed in red, scattering seeds on a lush patch of ground under sunny blue skies. So — how lucky can I be? I have two wonderful and unique mementos. The clippings and pictures about my mother are great treasures to me and my sister as well.

Josephine Paxton Larson,  
'29 BA, '32 BA  
Robbinsville, North Carolina

*Editor's Note: The seal referred to is the official seal of the University of Oklahoma, which indeed Professor Paxton helped design. Roy Gittinger, in his 1942 history of the University, states that the seal, adopted in 1902, "was the result of the joint efforts of President Boyd, who contributed the idea of the sower, Professor Paxton, who selected the Latin motto, and Registrar George Bucklin, who drew the design." The Great Seal of Oklahoma combined the designs of the Seal of the Territory of Oklahoma with that of the proposed State of Sequoyah (Indian Territory), the latter seal having been designed and drawn by the Reverend A. Grant Evans, president of Henry Kendall College and later president of the University of Oklahoma. A reporter for The Daily Oklahoman, Japp E. Peddicord,*

*made the first draft of this combined seal.*

## Strike Up the Band!

Your article, "KGOU/FM: Carrying on a Tradition," in the Spring 1984 *Sooner Magazine* brought back some good memories.

Around 1940 the management of WNAD called William R. Wehrend, former OU band director, to send over some bandmen to record background music for a show on Statehood that they were making. Mr. Wehrend asked me to select 25 or 30 bandmen and direct them in this recording.

Professor Oscar (Daddy) Leher heard of the project and said that he had band music that was played on Statehood Day and welcomed us to use it.

I selected the cream of the OU band, and it was a real thrill to direct them in the recording, what with the theme of the program, the music, etc. The fellows did a marvelous job. The only names of bandmen that I remember now are Charles Rice on cornet, Leat Hendrix on bass, and probably Billy Hubbel on drums. Remembered or not they gave me a thrill that I won't forget.

Horace Duane Hunter,  
'40 B. MusEd., '49 M. MusEd.  
Burnet, Texas

I thought — and apparently so did everyone else who read it — that the *Sooner* story on KGOU was great. It hit particularly the theme that we have been trying to capitalize on for some time: that the station is in important respects the successor to WNAD. The historical material and photos were revealing, even though I thought I knew a great deal about WNAD. Most of all, though, it's a pleasure to see oneself quoted accurately . . . (It must have been accurate; my father was given a copy by a friend in Enid and told me, "It sounds like you: pompous.")

Anyway, congratulations on what we understandably think was a great job, and thanks.

Bruce Hinson, '68 MA  
Manager, KGOU  
Norman, Oklahoma

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reaching the moon, giving life to a national commitment to equal opportunity without regard to race or ethnic origin, and most recently, helping to repair the competitive disadvantage which America suffers in comparison to some of its main trading partners.

At times, this easy response to society's wishes has led to an unhealthy stretching of the fabric of the university, to assuming responsibilities that are not properly academic, and to adopting practices that are inconsistent with academic norms. But more often than not, universities have flourished as they have responded to high expectations. The willingness to respond has both produced intellectual stimulation and called forth resources that might otherwise not have been available. The trick has been to find ways of responding that do not compromise the essential autonomy over intellectual matters that lies at the heart of every successful university. It is one of the genuine triumphs of our educational system that we have learned how to do that trick almost routinely.

The final characteristic that I will mention is the unusual, indeed unique, set of relationships that has grown up between our universities and our governments. I have frequently tried to describe these relationships to foreign visitors, and I have concluded that even the best description of which I am capable is hard to comprehend, because our arrangements grow out of political, social, economic, and cultural circumstances that are simply peculiar to us. That odd mixture of state, local, national, and private financing on which virtually all institutions depend is, at best, puzzling. And try explaining the notion of tax subsidies to a Chinese visitor. There is much more than a language barrier at work there.

No one would or could invent the arrangements that now exist, and that may be one of their chief virtues. Another is that they seem to work. Let me mention one special feature that is especially important to universities, and may have particular meaning to this university, namely, the way in which the federal govern-

ment distributes funds for research. That system of distribution rests very heavily on judgments of the quality of individual pieces of work proposed by individual investigators (or teams of investigators). Compared to the practices that bear on the allocation of funds for other public purposes, what is striking about funding for science has been the relative absence of the usual constituency-based politics. The record is certainly not perfect, but it is a record marked by extraordinary self-restraint on the part of politicians for more than three decades.

The strong emphasis on intellectual quality in funding decisions is, I believe, one of the most important reasons for America's postwar scientific dominance. In intellectual work,

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there is simply no substitute for quality, and the willingness to settle, knowingly, for less than the best guarantees that the best will not emerge. When compromises are based on political considerations, whether those of an ideological nature, as in the Soviet Union, or grow out of electoral politics, damage is deep and systematic because it comes to pervade the entire system.

But there is another characteristic of a system that rewards quality and the promise of quality that is especially hard for a democratic nation like ours to deal with. That is that rewarding quality also tends to reinforce quality. To put it crudely, the rich always seem, if not actually to get richer, at least to stay rich. We are terribly ambivalent about this phenomenon.

We admire people and organizations that consistently succeed, even while part of us resents and is suspicious of their success. There is a powerful force in our society that wishes to believe that important human qualities are — or ought to be — distributed evenly throughout the population, even as our daily experience tells us that they are not.

The problem is certainly not limited to universities, or indeed, to politics. Try as they might (and for commercial reasons, they try very hard), no professional sport has found a way to distribute success evenly throughout their leagues. For all the talk about parity, it is a pretty safe bet that at the end of the season, the Cowboys, Raiders, Dolphins, and Steelers will be somewhere near the top of the NFL, and that the Dodgers, Orioles, Celtics, and Lakers will be in contention in their leagues. Over time, those with the best management — or something — win more often than the others, no matter how the rules are changed to prevent it.

But there is a secret hidden in all of that. It is that the best can fall and that others can rise, and that the very system that makes that difficult also makes it possible. In my own professional lifetime, I have been close witness to three instances in which universities moved from the middle of the pack or lower into the upper part. Those three are Stanford, UCLA, and UC San Diego. There are other examples from elsewhere in the country; I happen to know those best because I was closest to them.

While two of those are public institutions and one is private, I believe that their successes have common elements. One was strong, local, public support. In the case of the UC institutions, that support came primarily from the state; in Stanford's case, it was private philanthropy. A second was the availability of funds from the federal government which could be laid on top of the base that was locally built to provide the extra resources that high quality demands. They were able to win those funds precisely because an essentially nonpolitical distribution system made it possible for their emerging areas of quality to be recognized and rewarded and to