

THE UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA
**PRESIDENT'S
LEADERSHIP
CLASS**

Celebrates Its 25th Anniversary



Enjoying their special status as the first President's Leadership Class, members of PLC '61 pose for a 25th anniversary reunion photograph. Left to right, front row, are Linda Chandler Verges, Billi Kaye Smith Fogg, Carol Bird and Carol Javes; standing, Vic Ashford, Bill Dawson, Bill Winans, Bill Mercer, David Milligan and Dan Nelson.

They have always considered their class an elite corps. With their list of accomplishments over the last quarter century, they may be right.

The letter from the Philippines was typical of the responses from those unable to join their fellow President's Leadership Class alumni for the 25th anniversary reunion on September 21.

"We'll probably be back in the U.S. next year," lamented Nita Anderson Main, a member of the first PLC Class in 1961 who is stationed with her husband at the U.S. Embassy in Manila, "and I'd have walked, if necessary, from D.C. to be there."

She included a picture of the family, along with messages for old friends and University mentors, as did many of her far-away colleagues with addresses in 41 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, eight foreign countries and assorted APO boxes.

Had Nita made it to the festivities this year, she would have found 420 veterans of the PLC experience and their spouses gathered at the Oklahoma Memorial Union for trolley tours of the campus, individual class meetings and photos, a champagne reception and the silver anniversary banquet. Most of all, she could have shared the exchange of old war stories, the rundown on classmates, both present and absent, and an update on the current status of PLC and the University. For as much as any other single group of students, President Leadership Class members seem to



Visiting before the President's Leadership Class banquet are honored guests President Emeritus Paul F. Sharp, left, and President Frank E. Horton and his wife Nancy.



Alumni of PLC Class of '78 get together at the champagne reception, left to right, Laure Vaught, Monte Wilson, Kedre Rose, Jill Brundrett, Gregg Julian and Carilyn Vidaillet.



From the top, Greg Kubiak breaks up MC David Burr with his Banowsky years recap, following era reviews by Terry Heineman, Cleta Deatherage Mitchell and Tim Hightower.

develop a personal dedication to the institution and a loyalty to each other that sets them apart.

That affection was particularly evident at the banquet. Special guests were President Emeritus and Mrs. George L. Cross, President Emeritus and Mrs. Paul F. Sharp, and OU's new President and Mrs. Frank E. Horton. The master of ceremonies was Vice President David A. Burr, PLC's founder and its sponsor for the first 10 years.

Highlighting the program were reviews of each presidential era by a PLC member who was there: Terry Heineman, PLC '63, for the Cross years; Cleta Deatherage Mitchell, PLC '68, for the Hollomon years; and Tim Hightower, PLC '74, for the Sharp years. Greg Kubiak, PLC '79, did his colleagues one better by recreating the impersonation he made famous as a student, recounting the Banowsky years in first person, complete with silvered hair and sunglasses.

The four PLC classes still at the University ended the program with a musical "Tribute to PLC," written by Karen Johannes, PLC '82.

The PLCers, all 25 classes of them, always have considered themselves somewhat of an elite corps, in the best sense of the phrase. Selected as high school seniors for their demonstrated abilities to lead their fellow students in a wide variety of activities, they come to OU with a unique opportunity to develop that leadership potential. In weekly meetings throughout their freshman year, they are exposed to the current leadership of the University — faculty, administration and student — and of the state. They have access to the OU president and to top level administrative class sponsors he designates to direct the program.

After a thorough grounding in the organization of the institution, PLC members perform several service tasks —

hosting special events, conducting tours, assisting with student recruitment on campus and in their hometowns. And almost without trying, they begin developing their own personal networks for their next three years in college — and beyond.

"I've always thought that the greatest benefit the members of PLC receive from the program is just knowing each other," Burr contends.

"They are kindred spirits; they understand each other. They are mutually supportive, promote each other's interests and make use of other PLC members' special talents and abilities in all sorts of activities for as long as they are on the campus. They wheel and deal among themselves just like leaders anywhere — business, government, community and social affairs. They make the most of their opportunities, and as a result the entire University benefits.

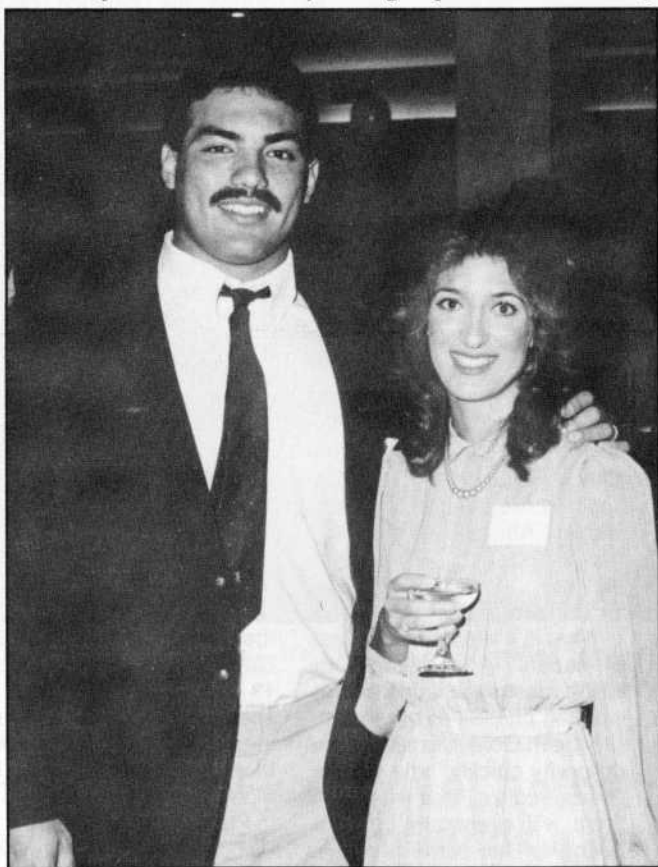
Burr originated the President's Leadership Class idea in 1960 in response to instructions from then-President Cross to find a way to retain outstanding Oklahoma high school seniors who were being lost to out-of-state colleges and universities. From nominations submitted by their high schools, 57 entering freshmen were selected to receive tuition scholarships and participate in the class in the fall of 1961.

Succeeding OU presidents, J. Herbert Hollomon, Sharp, Banowsky, and Horton, as well as interim presidents Pete Kyle McCarter, J. R. Morris and Martin Jischke, have maintained a strong interest in the program. Membership has grown to approximately 85 freshmen annually, still predominantly Oklahomans but with a few outstanding out-of-staters obtained through the student recruiting process or alumni recommendations.

Although Burr has remained as an advisor, other administrators have assumed direction of the class, including



Amy Hickey introduces the on-campus PLC alumni, backed up by the current PLC freshmen, in a musical "Tribute to PLC," written by Karen Johannes for the group's 25th anniversary banquet in the ballroom of the Oklahoma Memorial Union.



All America nose guard Tony Casillas was in the spotlight most of 1985, but at the reunion his role was to escort his medical student wife, Lisa Clayton Casillas, PLC '79.



Class of '83 on-campus PLC alumnae, Walker Tower president Cath Burton, left, and Housing Center Association Director Melinda Bennett attend the reunion reception.



The man who first saw the need to keep Oklahoma's high school leaders in Oklahoma colleges, President Emeritus George L. Cross, and his wife Cleo, seated, are greeted at the 25th anniversary banquet by the current PLC sponsor, Student Affairs Vice President Anona Adair.



The first class sponsor, David Burr, poses for a photo with Lisa Williams, left, and Estrellita Doolin, PLC '84.

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gram is designed to foster responsibility, objective evaluation of their own abilities and those of others and mutual respect, not just competition for the brass ring.”

Although PLC is a freshman program, the upperclassmen have persistently expressed regret in discontinuing their formal connection with the group during the balance of their campus years. In 1981, with a minimum of administrative guidance, a group calling themselves the On-Campus PLC Alumni established a steering committee and five volunteer service committees to assist the University.

The hosting committee performs “meeting and greeting” duties for any campus department needing hospitality “professionals.” The recruiting committee visits and writes prospective students and conducts the Leadership Event seminar for outstanding high school seniors. The publications committee publishes an alumni newsletter monthly on-campus and biannually off-campus. The scholarship committee established and awards the privately funded \$500 David A. Burr Scholarships to 19 PLC upperclassmen, last spring accomplishing much of their fund raising in a phone-a-thon to off-campus PLC alumni.

Plans already are under way for another PLC reunion in 1990, when the class is 30 and the University of Oklahoma is 100, when the “on-campus alumni” are alumni in fact. ☐

Associate Provost Joseph Ray, Jack Stout, director of OU Services Center in Tulsa, Alumni Executive Director Paul Mas-sad and the present sponsors, Student Affairs' vice president and associate vice president, Anona Adair and David Schrage.

What is it like to lead a class of leaders? Adair finds it one of the most stimulating and rewarding phases of her job.

“The PLCers size each other up pretty quickly,” she admits. “They realize that many of them will eventually be competing for the same positions and honors on the campus. But fortunately, this university is large enough to accommodate a lot of leadership. The pro-