

The Seeds Of Excellence

The Story of the
University of Oklahoma Foundation

By GEORGE L. CROSS

In this second *Sooner Magazine* excerpt from *The Seeds of Excellence: The Story of the University of Oklahoma Foundation*, George L. Cross once again addresses OU history in terms of the people who lived it. As in his previous books on integration, intercollegiate athletics, academic freedom, college administration, the wartime campus and research, Cross tells the story of private giving to the University in an informal style that intersperses facts and figures with anecdotes and personal remembrances. With the exception of James S. Buchanan, 1923-25, who served from necessity rather than choice during a search for a permanent president, George L. Cross was the only OU president to come up from the ranks. After beginning his University career as an assistant professor of botany in 1934, he progressed rapidly to full professor, department chairman, dean and finally president from 1944 to 1968. As president emeritus, he has remained the University's elder statesman and chronicler of its story.

Cross has known nearly all the principal players in *The Seeds of Excellence* and worked personally with many of them to achieve the University's academic ambitions. Few of them looked upon themselves as philanthropists; rather they were Oklahomans—alumni or just good friends—who saw the University of Oklahoma as a good investment in the future. Howard McCasland of Duncan, subject of the following Cross excerpt, staked his claim early in OU's history, then passed along his commitment to his alma mater to succeeding generations.

T. Howard McCasland: A Biography

Howard McCasland was a remarkable man, not merely successful professionally and financially but loved and respected by all who knew him. These qualities were probably evident in childhood, but certainly they were apparent for all to see by the time McCasland reached the University of Oklahoma, as George L. Cross attests in *The Seeds of Excellence*.

But this excerpt is only part of the McCasland story as Cross knew it. Elsewhere in his book the president emeritus recounts the part his friend played in the transformation of the original University of Oklahoma Foundation from a trust estate to a charitable corporation in 1955, to his subsequent service as vice chairman then chairman of the organization's board of trustees, of the pivotal role he played in the first University-wide private gifts campaign in 1961, the five-year \$20 million Plan for Excellence.

"McCasland worked tirelessly," Cross writes, "in the solicitation of many prospects. He personally contributed funds to provide four faculty supplements during the five-year period and later endowed the program to continue the supplements."

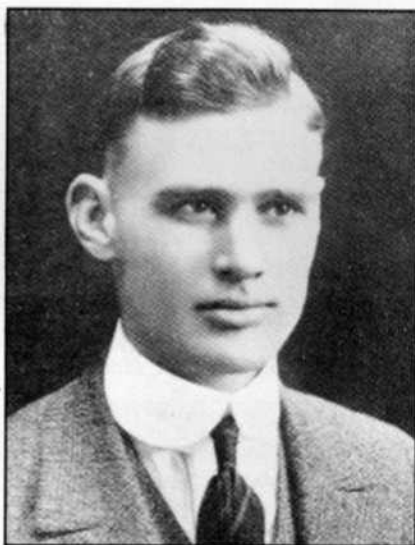
The McCasland influence was felt throughout the institution, quietly, never seeking fanfare or favors. In 1965 the University regents voted to name the four wings of Adams Center, the new high-rise dormitory, for Sooner families whose long-standing support had been significant in OU's development; that one name would be McCasland was a foregone conclusion.

Howard and Vivian McCasland sent their two children, Mary Frances and Tom Jr. to OU. Tom married a Sooner, Phyllis Hahn of Blackwell; Mary Frances married a Kansan, Jack Maurer, who thereafter displayed a convert's zeal in his service to OU. Marilyn Maurer Hugon, Diane Maurer Garis and Barbara Maurer and Tom III and Mark McCasland carried on the Sooner tradition by attending the University.

When Howard McCasland retired from the Foundation board in 1973, he was succeeded by his son-in-law, who in his turn became chairman of the board in October 1985. (See "Prologue" on the inside front cover.) When Maurer's untimely death in March 1986 cut short his leadership, Tom Jr., in typical McCasland fashion, was willing to step forward to fill the vacant OU Foundation trusteeship.

Thomas Howard McCasland, the third chairman of the trustees of the University of Oklahoma Foundation, was very much a home-grown product. Born in February, 1895, near Duncan, Indian Territory, to Olivia and J. C. McCasland, he spent most of his life in that area except when he attended the University of Oklahoma, taught and coached athletics for a year, and served eighteen months in France with the U.S. Army during World War I.

Following graduation from Duncan High School with scholastic and athletic honors, he entered the University of Oklahoma the fall of 1912. Howard,



OU Western History Collections

Howard McCasland, B.A.

*He came, he saw, he conquered all
our hearts; man so handsome,
bashful, brave; man of many parts.*

— 1916 Sooner Yearbook

as he was affectionately known on the campus, was exceptionally endowed both physically and mentally. As a student he was active in two sports, basketball and football. During his senior year, 1915-16, as center and captain of the basketball team, he scored a total of 407 points — a school record that was not broken for more than twenty-five years.

In football Howard participated in another record-setting event. It occurred on the university's first official Homecoming Day, in 1915, in a game with the University of Kansas. Kansas had scored early and easily (during

the first three minutes) and led 7-0. Hoping to overcome quickly this preliminary handicap, Neil Johnson, the quarterback, decided to use the talents of Forest ("Spot") Guyer, Oklahoma's passing genius of the early days and its first All-American football player. Johnson called a pass play — Guyer to McCasland. To the delight and amazement of the homecoming crowd, Guyer, deep in Oklahoma territory, unleashed a fifty-five-yard pass, which, soaring skyward, threatened to pass over the receiver, but finally was snatched from the air by the racing McCasland. It was a national record for that year and a school record which stood for a great many years. According to Harold Keith, in *Oklahoma Kickoff*, it was necessary for McCasland to make a "wonderful leap" for the ball. According to Keith, McCasland's account of the record-making catch, was as follows:

I glanced over my shoulder and saw the ball coming yards over my head. I remembered Bennie [Owen] saying "Try, guy, you might be surprised" so I jumped as high as I could, reached as far as I could and the darn ball lit right in my hands! Damn! I sure was lucky!

Howard's emphatic explanation characterized his later life — he was always quick to recognize an opportunity, make the most of it, and be modest when discussing it.

Howard did not confine his collegiate activities to athletics. He was active socially with the Kappa Alpha fraternity, in the classroom he performed well enough to earn membership in the Pe-et honorary scholastic fraternity, and his overall record brought him a coveted Letzeiser Medal as he ended his collegiate career.

Following graduation with a B.A. degree in 1916, Howard was named athletic director and coach at what is now Northern Oklahoma College, at Tonkawa. But he left the post after one year to serve with the field artillery of the U.S. Army during World War I. After eighteen months he was discharged as a first lieutenant.

Howard did not return to the academic world after the war ended but instead went back to Duncan, returning to his home base about the time the Empire Field discovery well was drilled in late 1919. Quick to recognize opportunity, he opened a real



The family gathers in 1965 at the dedication of OU's McCasland Tower, from left, Jack Maurer, Mary Frances Maurer (in front of brother Tom), Regent Reuben Sparks, Phyllis McCasland, Howard and Vivian McCasland and George Cross.

estate and oil-lease brokerage office at Duncan. Later he acquired a small rotary rig, which he used for oil-and-gas production. In 1945 he organized the Mack Oil Company, a family- and employee-owned venture, and was chairman of its board for the rest of his life. In addition to his oil ventures he was active in ranching, real estate development, banking, and other enterprises.

Despite his involvement with rapidly increasing business activities, he found time for the really important things in life. He courted Vivian Fullwood, of Duncan, who was teaching in the Duncan school system. His courtship culminated in marriage in 1926, and to this union two children were born, Thomas Howard Jr. and Mary Frances. In later years, Mary Frances married Jack Maurer. Both the son and the son-in-law are active in the family business.

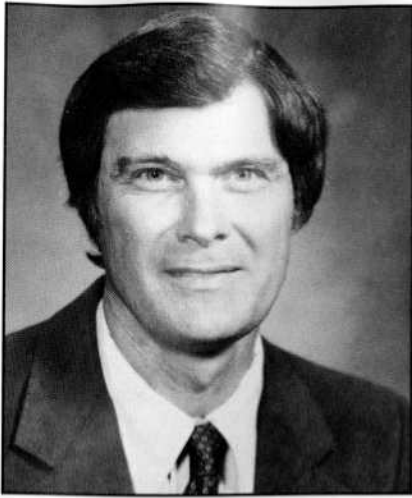
With a personal fortune amassed relatively early in life, Howard was determined to repay the society that had made his success possible. He or-

ganized the McCasland Foundation to handle his charitable contributions, and he made his extraordinary organizational and leadership abilities available in public service. The University of Oklahoma benefited greatly from his contributions of money and time. Although the many thousands of dollars that he gave to the foundation were of the utmost importance, especially during a time when the university was having great difficulty competing with other institutions for a quality faculty, the leadership that he provided for his alma mater was of even greater significance. In addition to his contributions as chairman of the University of Oklahoma Foundation, he served as president of the Dad's Association and president of the Alumni Association and was a charter member of the Touchdown Club.

His interests and contributions of talent were by no means confined to the University of Oklahoma. In his home town he served for years as a director, vice-president, and president

of the Duncan Chamber of Commerce. He helped organize the Duncan Industrial Foundation, served as president, and then continued as a member of its board. He was a long-term member of the Duncan Rotary Club, serving several terms on the board of directors and as vice-president and president. He helped organize the Community Chest drive in Duncan and served as chairman of the drive in 1955. He was chairman of the local draft board during World War II.

At the state level he was active as a director of the Oklahoma Independent Petroleum Association, served two years on the Oklahoma State Highway Commission, was a member of the Board of Directors of the Oklahoma Highway Commission, was a member of the Board of Directors of the Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation, helped organize the Oil Information Center at the University of Oklahoma, served as director of the Oklahoma Heart Association, was a member of the Governor's Economic



In April 1986 T. H. McCasland Jr. became the third family member to be elected an OU Foundation trustee.

Development Commission during the Raymond Gary administration, and served on the board of the Waurika Reservoir Conservancy District.

At the national level he was active in the Independent Petroleum Association of America as a director and as area vice-president. He was a member of the Black Beaver Council of the Boy Scouts of America.

Howard's greatest benefactions were in his home community. Through his foundation he provided land for two parks and recreational areas in Duncan, the Jaycee-McCasland Mighty Mite Football Field and the McCasland Rotary Park and Softball Field. He also provided land for a city lake and recreational area. Perhaps his most notable contribution was an 11,500-square-foot public library built at a cost of more than half a million dollars in the mid-1970s.

His benefactions extended beyond Duncan. He provided sustained support to the Kansas Foundation for Private Colleges; he provided funds for supplements to faculty salaries at the University of Minnesota; and he made contributions from time to time to Oklahoma State University; Central State University; the Oklahoma College of Liberal Arts, at Chickasha; and the University of Texas at Arlington. Much of his giving was in the form of scholarships for needy students. He appeared to be motivated by a desire to see that capable young people had an opportunity to acquire a higher



During the Cross presidency, friendships between University benefactors, administrators and faculty often were cemented on highly successful fishing excursions. Howard McCasland, center, with OU Book Exchange manager Jim Mayfield, left, and an unidentified companion, was a frequent participant in these outings.




Howard McCasland, left, was one of the first to receive the American Library Trustees Association's major library benefactor award, presented in 1977 by national board member Virginia Young, at right, with Dion Wood of Duncan.

education, and his gifts of supplements to faculty salaries indicated that he wanted young people to have the best possible instruction.

In 1959, in recognition of his local contributions, the Duncan Junior Chamber of Commerce named him senior citizen of the year. In the same year his grateful alma mater, the University of Oklahoma, presented him with a Distinguished Service Citation, the greatest honor bestowed by the institution. Later he was elected to Beta Gamma Sigma business fraternity at the university and was named a member of the Academy of University Fellows. In 1972, in recognition of his contributions to the petroleum industry, the Oklahoma Petroleum Council named him Outstanding Oklahoma Oil Man of the Year.

It is noteworthy of Howard McCasland that there was nothing about his appearance, attitude, or life-style to indicate that he was a man of exceptional wealth and influence. He was quiet, moderate, almost self-effacing, and courteous even in times of disagreement. Only an occasional flash from his penetrating blue eyes gave hint of his steely determination to see that things were done properly. In no sense could he be regarded as a conspicuous consumer of worldly goods; he lived simply in a relatively modest home in Duncan, and for recreation he went to a little cottage by a lake on one of his farms where he liked to fish.

During the mid-1970s his lake was threatened by the invasion of a pond weed which made fishing somewhat difficult. When he learned that, to eradicate the weed, it would be necessary to drain the lake, remove the vegetation, scrape the bottom, and then let the area rest for a year, Howard announced that he had too little time left for such a long-drawn-out treatment of his prized property; he would continue to use the lake as it was. He died the next year, on December 28, 1979.

Thousands of friends and recipients of his generosity mourned Howard McCasland's passing. His concern for others and the manner in which he expressed that concern made an indelible mark on the society around him. The good that he did will endure. 

A New Book by
George Lynn Cross

THE SEEDS OF EXCELLENCE

*The Story of
the University of Oklahoma
Foundation*



Created to facilitate private giving to Oklahoma's flagship institution of higher education, the University of Oklahoma Foundation was born in December 1944, during the first of George Lynn Cross's 25 years as the university's president. The foundation's first home was the bottom drawer of the president's desk; its total assets, \$160.

Forty years later, with foundation assets topping \$60 million, its operations housed in its own building, and a separate division of the university engaged in private fund raising, President Emeritus Cross has chosen private giving as the theme of his sixth book on the development of the institution.

The Seeds of Excellence goes all the way back to those pioneer Oklahomans who were willing to dig deep into their meager resources to build a university on the barren prairie. Cross pays tribute to the generosity of spirit and vision for the future which caused Sooners past and present to furnish the university with a margin for quality which state funds could not supply.

Many of the names in this book — individuals, families, companies, charitable foundations — are familiar to most Oklahomans; others will be remembered primarily for the gifts they made, while some preferred anonymity. Cross has researched all the stories, the successes and the failures, and punctuated them with the personal anecdotes that set his Sooner chronicles apart.

Now at the publisher, this book is available in hard cover through the University of Oklahoma Foundation at \$19.95 postpaid.

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