

SOONER MEMORIES



1967 Senior Law Class officers gather around their secretary, Audrey Shultz.

MRS. SHULTZ GOES TO LAW SCHOOL

By AUDREY SHULTZ

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION:

Last fall, when Audrey Shultz returned to visit old friends at the University of Oklahoma Law Center, she had quite a struggle getting into the building—and for good reason. Audrey Shultz is 90 years old. Slowed by arthritis, she gets around with the aid of a walker, and navigating the entrance ramp took some maneuvering. But don't think for a moment that a little physical inconvenience could keep this lady from her objective. She overcame much larger obstacles to enter the law school in 1964, the year she enrolled at the age of 67.

Even as a law freshman, Audrey was no stranger to OU. Her widowed mother, Dollie Flicht, first brought Audrey and her two sisters, Eva and Sylvia, to Norman in 1913 to attend the University. They traveled from Ponca City in the back of a covered wagon packed with all their worldly possessions. Between them, the three Flicht girls earned five degrees, Audrey's a bachelor's in zoology in 1917, followed by a master's in 1918.

That same year she married Benjamin Franklin "Bennie" Shultz, an OU electrical engineering graduate who went to work for the University's physical plant, retiring as University engineer in 1961. He died three years later.

All four of the Shultz children attended OU. Bennie Jr. earned two degrees in electrical engineering; Evalee graduated in mathematics, Ruth in physics. Marie began a chemistry degree at OU which she completed at another university. The 10 Shultz grandchildren and 20 great-

grandchildren have carried home a basketful of degrees, all in some branch of science, engineering or medicine. Grandson Eugene Stanley received his Ph.D. in physics from Harvard University in 1967, at the same time his grandmother was graduating from the OU College of Law.

Audrey's adventures in law school, recounted on the following pages, fail to mention that she simultaneously was managing the 32 rental units she and Bennie had acquired in Norman and operating a Charolais cattle business in western Oklahoma. She takes pride in having used the first \$10,000 she made in cattle to maintain her charter membership in the University of Oklahoma Associates, the \$1,000-a-year support group she uses to "repay" the University for a lifetime association.

The OU College of Law she attended was in Monnet Hall, the legendary "Law Barn" on Parrington Oval, predecessor of the current OU Law Center on Timberdell Road. In the 1967 law yearbook, one picture of her is captioned "Mrs. Shultz: The Barn's Elder Statesman." Upon graduation, a half-century after receiving her first OU degree, Audrey Shultz, age 70, opened a law office in Norman, which she did not close until 1978.

Five years ago she moved to Florida to be near her daughter and enjoy the warm winters. The people, she reports, are very nice but not quite the same. "They just don't hustle like we do in Oklahoma."

In all fairness, of course, Audrey sets a very high standard.

—CJB

My husband had died. All my children were married and gone. I was all alone. I had spent my whole life as a wife and mother. I was lonesome. But I wasn't going to feel sorry for myself. I was too independent for that.

Something had to be done, but what? I wasn't young anymore; in fact, I was already old. I wasn't prepared to do anything special. I thought I might do well in real estate. I had had some experience in renting a few houses that we owned. Why not try that?

In preparation, I took two courses in real estate at the business school at the University of Oklahoma, passed the examination the state requires and started out as a salesperson. I tried and tried all summer, but I didn't sell a single house. I was discouraged.

I thought if I knew more about contracts and property, that might help. That fall, I enrolled in those two courses in the law school. I knew nothing about law, but I did know a professor who taught the contracts course. So I enrolled in his class. I had never even met the professor of the property course.

Those were the days when women didn't take law. In fact, there were only three women in my class. Two were young and pretty; I was the old one. But the boys were kind—they didn't say "old," but "older"—that sounded younger. I imagine they thought I would soon "wash out" anyway.

It had been 50 years since I had graduated, and that was in science. I had never even had a pre-law course. Law was different. I was learning a lot, but I had a long way to go. I wasn't as smart as I used to be. The years had taken their toll. But I wasn't going to give up. I stayed right in there and studied all the harder.

About the middle of the semester, the freshmen were given what was called a "sample test" to show them what to expect on the real quiz at the end of the semester. Our grades for the entire course would be our grades on that final quiz. Of course, I took that sample test.

A few days after the papers were in, the contracts professor called me into his office to go over my paper. He pointed out where I had gone wrong, and in a nice way, told me what would



When "the boys" asked Audrey Shultz, foreground, to join them at their "conference table" in the Union, the invitation spelled acceptance as a law student.



The 1967 law yearbook was short on feminine faces — two seniors, six juniors and seven freshmen — enough, however, for a chapter of Kappa Beta Phi, the oldest legal sorority in the world, formed in 1908 before women could vote. Orpha Merrill, center, a practicing attorney and wife of OU Professor Maurice Merrill, was the group's "chancellor," Ann Belanger, right, "dean" and Audrey Shultz, "assistant dean." Today, women comprise 30-40 percent of each law class.

be expected on the quiz at the end of the semester. Since I had known him before, I got the idea he was trying to tell me not to expect any special consideration.

So I said, "If I can't make it on my own, I don't want it."

Then he said, "I'm glad you feel that way."

I liked the property professor; he had a good sense of humor. He could tell a somewhat shady joke—explaining a

point of law—in such a way that even the girls could laugh along with the boys. But one day he slipped. He had called upon a boy to explain a case, but apparently the boy was not doing so to his liking.

Suddenly he turned, pointed at me and said, "Mrs. Shultz, you are a woman of the world . . ."

He got no further. The boys laughed and laughed.

I quipped, "As old as I am, that is

almost a compliment.”

Again everyone laughed. Poor man—his face turned red. He tried to explain that since I was a business woman, older, I would know the right answer.

One day I got to class a little early. I had picked up a school paper in the Union building on my way and was sitting in my seat reading. I read that the Board of Regents had passed a rule that, if you first got a degree, then took the three-year law course, you would receive a juris doctorate degree.

All my life I had wanted a Ph.D. But science had changed so in the last 50 years, I knew I could never make it now. My husband and I had married young and had three babies by the time we were 25. There was no time or money for more school then. But I did have a degree, so why not try for this doctorate? I decided to do just that.

My first semester soon passed. Grades were out; everyone was asking everyone else what grades they had made. When the boys found out that I hadn't flunked, they were surprised. I was even invited to sit with them at the big table in the Union cafeteria where the law students congregated for coffee. I was now accepted as one of them.

In one of our classes the second semester, we had a young professor just out of Harvard graduate law school. Whenever we had a “sex case,” he always gave that one to me. Then he would stand there with a quizzical look on his face as if to say, “I wonder how she'll handle this one.”

One day I got even. The case involved some real estate brokers who were trying to get a tubercular hospital built in the middle of a residential area. The residents were protesting.

The professor said, “Why are they objecting? Don't they know TB is not contagious?”

Without thinking, I piped up, “But it is!”

“How do you know?” he asked.

I answered, “Because I had medic bacteriology 50 years ago.”

Everybody laughed. Really, it was funny. I laughed right along with them. However, the next day the professor began the class by saying, “We've got to get over this old-



“The Regents passed a rule that . . . you would receive a juris doctorate degree. All my life I had wanted a Ph.D. . . . So why not try for this doctorate?”

fashioned idea that TB is contagious . . .” etc., etc., for about 10 minutes. That made me mad.

After class, I went over to the biological science department and talked to the head of that department. It just so happened he was head of the tuberculosis program in Oklahoma and had a fourth edition book, just off the press, written by the world's foremost authority on tuberculosis. He let me have that book and told me to ask the professor if I could read a certain paragraph to the class. It said in more detail what I had stated before.

When the prof came into class, I went up to him, showed him the book and asked if I could read a paragraph to the class. He read it, asked me what “sputum” meant, and then with the whole class looking expectantly at him, he couldn't do anything but say, “Mrs. Shultz would like to read to you a paragraph in this book.”

This I did, explaining who wrote the book and ending by saying, “Yes, get rid of old-fashioned ideas—but with proven facts.”

The class clapped, and so did the

prof. I'll have to say this—he was a good sport!

School rushed on as usual for quite a while. I took part in all class activities, sold tickets, climbed the steps instead of riding the elevator, joked with the boys and was enjoying myself very much.

We now were seniors and quite informal acting. In one class, a boy nearby was reciting when, all of a sudden, he stopped, complaining to the professor that Mrs. Shultz bothered him by shaking her head like she didn't believe what he was saying. I quickly straightened up and held my head still. I hadn't realized I was even moving my head.

The next morning when I came to class, I had doubled up a red bandana handkerchief, put it around my forehead and tied the ends to a yardstick, which I had stuck underneath my dress—so I couldn't move my head. The boys really enjoyed that! The professor even laughed.

All too soon we were enrolling in our last semester of school. Everybody knew we should take a course called creditors' rights. It was a good course, taught by a good teacher and one we would need later in our practice. I enrolled in it.

The first day of class, I saw most of the good students sitting in the back row where the professor assigned those who were auditing the class instead of taking it for credit. They knew the prof was a strict grader, and they didn't want their averages to go down.

Why didn't I do that? It wasn't too late. I had three days to withdraw from the class, enroll in an easier one and audit that one like they were doing. I was sorely tempted. I also knew all my children were coming home to see me graduate. It was a hard course. What if I flunked?

Somehow, I just couldn't do it. The prof was a good teacher and fair in his grading as he saw it. In one of his classes, even the dean's son got a C-minus. Looking back, I think that was one of the bravest things I ever did!

As a postscript to this story, I did pass that course and graduate. The children came home, and we all enjoyed ourselves. Still, I was a little sad. I had been having such a good time. It was a shame I had to graduate!