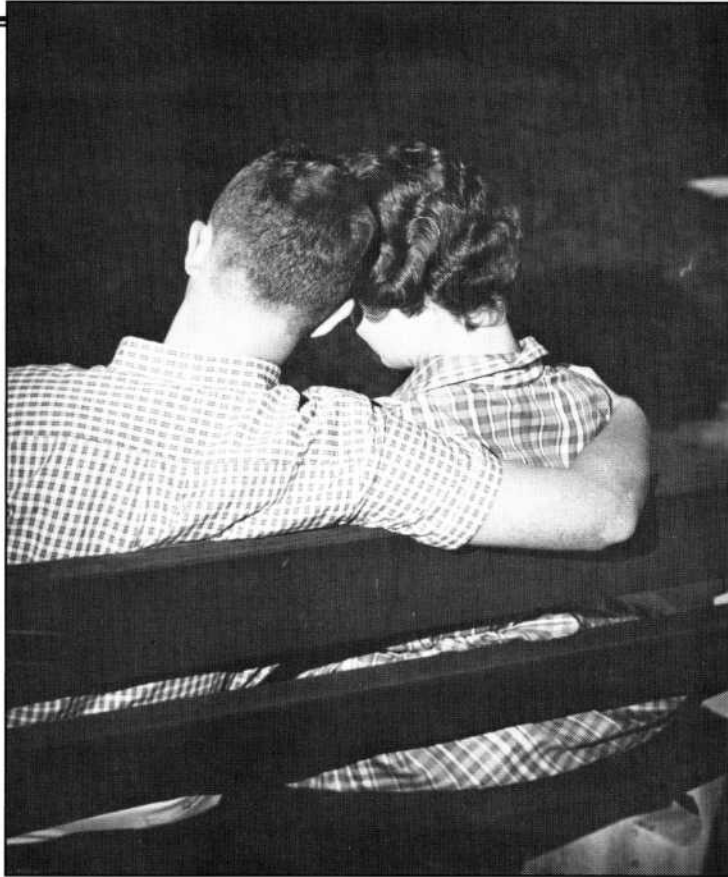


SOONER MEMORIES



Remember when. . .

By FRANK HEASTON

Advertising students at the H. H. Herbert School of Journalism and Mass Communication ranked Professor Frank Heaston among the good guys. They saw in him a real professional, but one who tempered high standards with a genuine concern for their welfare. Those who know Heaston best will cite another endearing quality as well: a love for the University of Oklahoma spawned in simpler days when he himself was a student and fed by an alumni loyalty

he has carried with him for nearly 40 years.

This affection for the institution brought him back to Norman in 1971 following a successful 20 years as an advertising executive with an international agency, a proprietary drug company and in the television, radio and newspaper media. Retired in 1987, Heaston won numerous faculty awards, the most prestigious being the Regents' Award for Superior Teaching and the Baldwin Study-Travel Award. — CJB

"Memories" on Following Pages



All that remains current in this vintage photo of Boyd Street looking northwest are the parking meters and the Town Tavern, and even its status is precarious.

Some months ago, I attended a performance of the OU Music Theatre-Opera Guild's production of "Broadway Festival." The program featured a number of hit songs from the '40s and '50s, songs I had hummed and danced to during the years I had been a student at OU.

While the production was an excellent one, I must admit that as I gazed down on the Holmberg auditorium stage, my mind wandered. I relived, ever so briefly, some of those wonderful times I experienced on the OU campus as a carefree college student before and after World War II.

My thoughts started with Annabelle Escoc, who, in late 1943, performed the then-popular "Cow Cow Boogie" on that very stage at some sort of freshman orientation I had attended during my first week on campus. I don't know why I've always remembered Annabelle. I never met her or saw her after that, insofar as I know, but during the past 40-plus years, her name has been linked in my mind with Holmberg Hall and my initiation into the University of Oklahoma.

My mind wandered next to a 1947 or 1948 drama school production of

"Life with Father" on that stage. It was while she was playing Mother in the show that I met Mary Graham. A little later, I gave her my fraternity pin in token of my first real campus romance.

Campus Corner was alive in those days. Many of the Greek houses were clustered around that area, as were a number of student rooming houses. All the latest Hollywood releases were shown at the old Boomer Theatre, on the west side of Asp, across the street from the second Boomer, recently converted into corporate offices for Harold's. Top price admission at the Boomer was 25 cents. With a Coke afterwards at one of the three Corner drug stores, a date was relatively inexpensive, even for those days.

If a guy really wanted to splurge and be a hero to his best girl, there was the Copper Kettle on Buchanan. Probably the most expensive Norman restaurant in those days, dinner for two with their wonderful fruit tarts would hit the budget for only three or four dollars. Today, the Kettle has been replaced by the Lovelight, another restaurant.

And then there was Rickner's, the

center of campus activity. Ray Rickner sold books, in competition with Varsity Book Store on Asp and the University Book Exchange. Rickner's cafeteria was very popular. On warm summer afternoons, there was always Rickner's tap room, so cool and relaxing. Many fine friendships were formed there over a pitcher of beer. All the store's space, including the cafeteria and tap room, has been converted into Ratcliffe's Book Store.

My most pleasant memories of Rickner's go back to fall rush weeks for the Greek houses. In the evenings, the sororities would bring their rushees or new pledges to Rickner's for Cokes. They would sit around tables on the balcony of the main room. On the floor below, the men of the various campus fraternities would try to out-sing the others as they serenaded the women with what I remember as some of the most beautiful music I have ever heard.

Other evenings (far too many, I fear) were spent at the favorite student hangout, Jack's Barbecue, which was way out in the country on Flood Avenue near what is now Robinson Street. Jack's, with an advertising slogan I never forgot, "More people eat at Jack's than anybody," is no more. There's not even a trace. As I remember, the tavern's two big rooms were filled to capacity every night, and singing duels between the fraternities were always part of the program. They just don't make cheeseburgers like Jack's cheeseburgers anymore.

Students seem to have sung more in those days. The Greeks taught their pledges; there was singing at most University functions; and "Don't Send My Boy to Texas" was a regular feature of home football games.

Memories may fade, but they don't change. On the other hand, change is a way of life in Norman and at the University.

In my day, 7,500 students was a record. Today, 20,000-plus is considered to be a normal enrollment. Norman has grown geographically to include the isolated farm lands on which we held picnics or wiener roasts. Population has multiplied five or six times since then. I-35 passes right over the spot on the South Canadian where so many wonderful parties were enjoyed around a camp fire. Shopping centers



In the '50s, students walked to one of the Campus Corner establishments for a Coke date — or if a guy was really a sport, he might shell out three or four dollars for dinner at the Copper Kettle, one of Norman's more expensive restaurants.

abound. In the '40s, we found what we needed on Campus Corner or on rare occasions, in businesses along downtown's Main Street.

In the '40s and '50s, there was a city bus line, and taxicabs would take you anywhere in Norman for a quarter. Today, the University runs a bus line on campus with limited routes around the city, but cabs are few. Most students have their own cars. In my day, few students could afford them even if they could find them to buy. World War II had sorely limited production. I remember that in my fraternity of some 85 men, only two had cars.

Attractive University housing and a multitude of apartments are available to students today. However, few rooming and/or boarding houses have survived. The Greeks have expanded with a new district south of the main campus sporting about a dozen sprawling houses. (At least they're new since my day.) The North Greek district includes those fraternities and sororities which decided to stay where they were, spending millions of dollars to enlarge and remodel their original houses.

The University has spread out, too. Yesteryear's lovers taking a walk in



These residents of a popular boarding house cheerfully gathered for a party pic on the front steps of their home, typical of the houses that dotted the community, providing accommodations for college students of the '40s and '50s.



The Pride of Oklahoma marching band's leader, the drum majorette—or major—is one OU fixture undaunted by time.



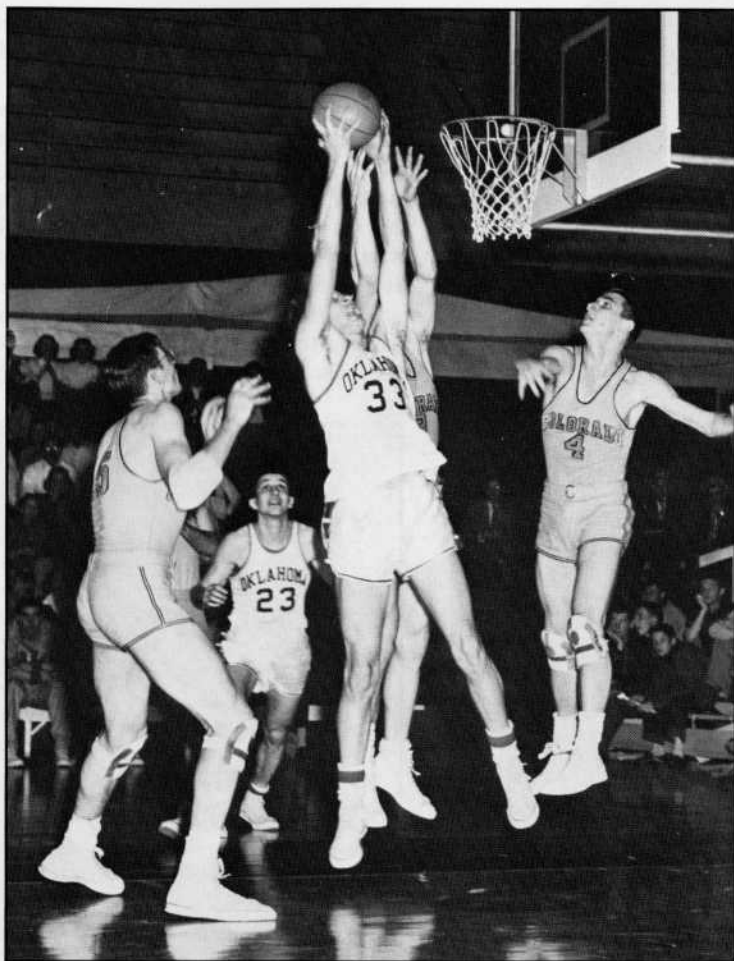
The ever-present Ruf Neks orchestrated a 1953 pep rally backing the Big Red against upcoming gridiron rival Notre Dame — even though it was to be for naught — the visiting Irish defeated the Sooners, 28-21.



This 1949 formal in the spacious ballroom atop the Union was one of countless black tie events held in the stately old room.



Pride director Leonard Haug, top, and an assistant diagram band maneuvers for an entertaining halftime show.



Sooner basketball great Gerald Tucker fights for a rebound in a game OU won 61-56 during the 1947-48 season. Fans seated courtside were practically part of the action in the old fieldhouse.



Oh, the styles of the well-dressed OU coed in the '50s: cotton sweaters, long skirts, scarves, anklets. The more things change, the more things stay the same?

the woods around the South Oval on the way to the Passion Pit would be shocked to see all the new buildings on the south end of the campus. Many of the buildings in the North Oval area, which housed the classrooms we attended, have long since been converted to administration or student activities. The transom in DeBarr Hall, through which Dr. Guy Y. Williams is reported to have occasionally made his classroom entrance, is long gone. The office where Dr. Jewel Wurtzbaugh patiently tutored Spenser to the slightly-behind-but-eager-to-learn student has been converted, with the rest of Buchanan Hall, to offices for Admissions and Records and the Bursar.

Football, of course, is still king on the lazy autumn weekends. The enlarged Memorial Stadium has barely kept pace with the growth of the student body, which now occupies more

than half of the east stands. The Pride of Oklahoma is still the pride of Oklahoma, just as it was in my day. The uniforms may have changed, but the spirit is the same. Hearts still jump to throats and goose bumps break out all over when the Pride marches down the field at home games.

Perhaps the biggest changes I've noted are in today's students. They seem to be more dedicated to study and future careers than most of my peers were. But, at the same time, they're relaxed and have all of the typical college good times I had, if not more.

Dress is different, of course. Today, everyone wears jeans along with a blouse or a T-shirt advertising someone's product. Sneakers are definitely the shoe-of-the-day. In the '40s and '50s, we wouldn't have been caught out without slacks and ties or skirts and

blouses, with a sweater added during the winter. And sneakers—they were but definitely restricted to Phys Ed classes. By the way, Phys Ed, today called HPER or Hyper (for Health, Physical Education and Recreation), is an elective, not a required course.

Dating and other activities have changed, too. There are fewer organized house parties, and the three-formal-dances-every-Friday-and-every-Saturday-night routine is as dead as the interurban. House parties, usually with what students call "a band" (they never knew the Ramblers or the Varsity orchestras as we did), are very informal in dress and in conduct.

With the advent of all the cars on campus, students tend to go out on dates alone or with another couple rather than with a group of couples. They make the Norman clubs, which seem to change from year to year for



Who would have guessed that library patrons could drive right up to the south entrance? Or for that matter, that the south entrance would permit entry to the library? The cars occupy the area now known as a pedestrian mall.


the most part. On weekends, a trip to Oklahoma City for dinner, a show or a club is not unusual. With fewer campus-wide activities, students tend to know fewer of their classmates than we did.

Today's students seem to have more spending money than we did, which many earn as waiters or waitresses in area restaurants and clubs. The extra money comes in handy since most students seem to be more clothes-conscious (in spite of the jeans), more car-conscious and more interested in apartment living.

Other changes of note: *The Oklahoma Daily* is now a standard-sized

newspaper instead of a tabloid; WNAD now plays country music and is privately owned with WWLS call letters; there is a fast food restaurant and beer in the Union and a pizza parlor in one of the dorms; that wonderful water fountain with the best ice-cold drinking water in the world is now gone from beneath the big elm tree in front of the administration building, as is the Spooner stone from the North Oval. The famous totem pole has been removed from behind the old Library to the Stovall Museum. The interurban station, where trolleys (and, later, buses) left for Oklahoma City every half hour of the day, is now a restau-

rant. And, you would never recognize Denco's, though the "Darlin'" is still available at the same location.

Gone are most of the faculty I knew and loved as a student and later as an alumnus. Gone is my old fraternity house. Gone from campus are all my old friends whom I remember with such pleasure and joy. But still around is the Sooner spirit and the glorious opportunity for students, present and future, to live out what could just be the best years of their lives. 



EDITOR'S NOTE: If Frank Heaston were a print journalist, rather than an advertising man, he would have known that to leave the most intriguing questions of a nostalgia piece unanswered is too cruel. The readers of Sooner Magazine would demand to know whatever happened to the memorable Miss Escoe, of "Cow Cow Boogie" fame, circa 1943. And what of Mary Graham and that first campus romance? Annabelle Cones, nee Escoe, '44 B.A. in music education, was found in Oklahoma City where she lives with husband Homer and teaches at the Inter-City Violin Studios. Alas, Mary and Frank's romance was short-lived. She earned a B.F.A. and M.F.A. in drama in 1950 and 1951 respectively and married another drama student, Robert Morris Treser, '53 M.F.A.. They live in LaHabra, California.