

## PROLOGUE

# New Faces, a New Beginning; It's All a Matter of Time

Starting over is hard to do; it is also exciting. It is a time for laying aside the shortcomings and disappointments of the past in favor of the optimism and opportunities of the future. On a university campus, we are allowed to start over each fall with the arrival of a whole new crop of bright, young people, eager to test themselves and the system. They come equipped with new clothes, new furnishings, new attitudes and new talents and abilities, and they present a new challenge for those charged with supplying the educational, social and personal enrichment opportunities they are paying for. This is the season that makes all of us remember why we work here.

This year, we started starting over a little early. The most significant addition to the family has been, of course, the new president of the University of Oklahoma, Richard L. Van Horn, whom *Sooner Magazine* introduces to alumni and friends in this issue. He will be working with an administration peopled with a few OU veterans and a number of relative newcomers. In the past two years, several new deans and executive officers have signed on; two vice presidencies and another deanship remain to be filled. And we have a new football coach.

On the faculty side, a large percen-

tage of the names associated with alumni memories are gone, all those dedicated teacher/scholars who flocked here at the end of WWII and remained through the revolution in American higher education. Happily those stalwarts have been succeeded—though not in nearly enough numbers—by a new generation of luminaries who daily are adding distinction to the University.

Campus facility expansion goes on to accommodate an ever-improving student population with even the old, familiar buildings receiving needed face-lifts and altered functions. Not only do you need a program to tell the players, you need a map to find them.

Such inevitable signs of progress are sometimes difficult for alumni to absorb. Certain things always should stay the same, and alma mater is one of these—only it never has and never will. One 1960s graduate told me recently that so far as he was concerned, George L. Cross, who signed his diploma, always would be president of the University of Oklahoma. As the possessor of a similar diploma, I understood what he was saying. But there have been five OU presidents since George Cross and thousands of additions to the alumni body, each with quite different memories.

The alumni and friends the institution needs most in times of transition are those who look back with fondness but move forward with the same eagerness they exhibited as newcomers here themselves. Progress requires a great deal of support and a certain amount of patience on the part of those who watch from the sidelines.

President Van Horn has inherited some problems. The past few years have not been easy ones. Dissension in the system of higher education, the shrinking state economic base, the public relations body blows which the University took from athletic miscon-



duct during the winter and spring, drastically changing entrance requirements and rising tuitions, all have had an impact on the face OU presents to the world. We simply will have to live through the recovery as we have countless times in the past. But that's the wonderful thing about starting over; along with a new beginning comes a grant of time to set things right.

Anytime there is change there will be second-guessing. Interestingly, many of the same people who would have preferred internal promotion in the presidency are those who would have opted for a national search for a new football coach. It appears, however, that the University made the right choice in both instances. In Richard Van Horn, the institution has a president of impeccable credentials. In Gary Gibbs, the team has a leader who is exactly what the press releases claim, a clean-living family man who happens to be one of the most promising young coaches in the business.

It is the very best season of the University year. There is more than enough enthusiasm and zest for life in our new arrivals to get us through the latent heat of Indian summer and into the vigor of an Oklahoma fall. And what more appropriate time to start over than during the countdown to the Centennial? Those Sooners of 100 years ago could have written the book on new beginnings. —CJB



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