

The Academy of Retired Professionals



In June 1990 Jessie Lone Clarkson Gilkey journeyed from her Denver home for one last opportunity to lead fellow Sooners in singing her favorite song, "OU Chant." Jessie Lone composed the University of Oklahoma's alma mater in 1927 as a School of Music faculty member.

SENTIMENTAL MOMENTS

When it comes to preserving memories of the University of Oklahoma, no group on campus does a better job than the Academy of Retired Professionals. Each of the 120-plus members possesses a personal storehouse of anecdotes reaching back to the beginnings of his or her college days or careers on the faculty or staff. Very little coaxing was needed to persuade the retirees to share their recollections at a Centennial "story-telling celebration" on March 7, 1990.

From story-telling to publication was a natural progression for the Academy. With the help of Dean Dan Davis of the College of Liberal Studies, the Academy brought out a paperback volume, *Centennial Stories*, as its 100th birthday gift to the University, soon followed by *Centennial Stories Too!* The books are fitting companions for the collection of videotaped personal histories that the Academy's executive secretary, W. David Steen, has been making for several years.

100 YEARS OF MUSIC

In the process of assembling Sooner stories, the Academy of Retired Professionals discovered a continuing theme running through their collective memories: music. Dance bands, marching bands, jazz piano, vocal ensembles and choirs, fraternity serenades, barbershop quartets. The University community, it appeared, had sung, danced and played its way through the century.

"100 Years of Music" was a June afternoon devoted to those musical memories, with music professor emeritus Colbert Hackler presiding. Oklahoma Cityans Bonnie Spencer and Baird Jones relived the 1920s and 1930s as campus band leaders. Assisting Jones was a combo composed of Richard Hilbert, Joe Whitecotton and John Williams. Pianist Laurie McCullough contributed some ragtime piano, then the audience got into the act with a sing-along.

Current director of the Pride of Oklahoma marching band, Gene Thrailkill, came equipped with his own more recent recollections and those of his predecessor, Leonard Haug. Eugene Springer added even earlier Pride memories, having been both member and part-time director as he prepared for a long, distinguished career in the OU mathematics department.

Jessie Lone Clarkson Gilkey journeyed from Denver, Colorado, to recall her days as a student and later a faculty member, including her composition of the "OU Chant" in 1927. It was the historical highlight of the event and a last, joyful campus appearance for the vivacious Jessie Lone, who died February 19, 1991.