

# LETTERS

## Bless the Peacemakers

Re: "Treasures from the Archives: With 'A Sense of Deep Regret . . .'"—*Sooner Magazine, Summer 1994.*

A story told many years ago by my great-grandmother, to illustrate that peacemaking is better than fighting, may broaden readers' understanding of the "stern Old Testament morality" of my grandfather, William Bennett Bizzell. That much is true. But he applied the Old Testament to himself; the New Testament was very much a part of his dealings with others.

Before Dr. Bizzell came to OU, he was president of Texas A&M. One member of the staff was one person most of the time and somebody quite different when he drank. One day he accosted Dr. Bizzell, accused him of conspiring to cause him to lose his job and punched him in the mouth when he denied the accusation.

According to my great-grandmother, Dr. Bizzell then struck the only blow of his life, knocking the drunk flat on his back in the gutter, and walked on.

The next day—sore, hung over, apprehensive and remorseful—the man came into the office, saying, "Dr. Bizzell, I'm sure you will agree that the college would be better off without me. To his surprise, Dr. Bizzell replied, "No, I don't agree. Except when you have been drinking, your work is excellent, and everybody likes and respects you. I never knew anybody who wasn't better off without liquor. Why don't you take the pledge and stay?"

The man stayed. I know no more of him. But many years later, I met his son, who, like me, was named for my grandfather. Such was his father's gratitude for being given an unmerited second chance.

*Bill Bizzell  
Richmond, Virginia*

## Another "Treasure"

From the Editor: Re: "My Dear Friend: David Ross Boyd and the Details of Office," *Spring 1994.*

A phone call from Franklin Rector of Edmond brings up-to-date the fate of his wife's uncle, William J. Cross, the young man whose father wrote President Boyd in 1904 to check on

"Willie's" classwork and whether he was "running around nights."

His father needn't have worried. From 1904-07 "Bill" Cross won campus fame as Bennie Owen's star quarterback, kicker and team captain. He returned home and coached football at Kingfisher College, losing to OU 45-5 in 1909. In 1929, after working in banks in Bixby and Kansas City, he came back to OU to begin 28 years in the athletic business office, retiring as treasurer in 1957. A familiar campus figure, he pitched in each fall until his death in 1976 to help with student ticket sales.

## Tributes to Wilkinson

I'm surprised and saddened that there appears to be no effort being brought forth to rename Owen Field to Owen-Wilkinson Field. As a graduate of 1961, I cannot imagine what OU would have been and what it would have become if Charles "Bud" Wilkinson had not arrived on the scene after World War II.

There can be no doubt that this gracious gentleman helped put OU on the map and into the national spotlight. Surely there would have been no Chuck Fairbanks or Barry Switzer Eras nor an enlarged stadium without the trail blazed by Coach Wilkinson in the late 1940s-1960s period.

His contribution must be placed at the least aside that of Coach Owen from an earlier era. Can anyone suggest any other appropriate honor that OU could bestow than the renaming of its athletic field?

*Jay L. Levine, '61 B.A.  
St. Louis, Missouri*

Bud Wilkinson's success came from all of the attributes set forth in "Prologue" of the *Sooner Magazine*, Spring 1994. His perfection of details guaranteed perfection of the whole! As landscape architect for OU during those years, Bud conferred with me on Monday mornings regarding the grooming of the playing surfaces on the practice fields and the main field.

His new Split-T offense depended on SPEED! Therefore, the grass on the practice fields was kept at a height of approximately four inches, whereas

the main field grass was kept at a height of about 3/4 inch. This made the sod tight and very fast. Yes, Bud was a gentleman and a scholar and a tactical genius.

My 20 years at OU were among my very best professionally because I was privileged to work with men like Dr. George L. Cross and Bud Wilkinson. I actually left my heart in Oklahoma.

*Robert H. Rucker  
The Woodlands, Texas*

P.S. Other than a host of friends, my greatest legacy will always be the great trees planted while there. But . . . that is another story.

## General Jack's Army

The article on Jack Mitchell really brought back the memories. Jack was a true campus hero who, we thought, could do no wrong.

That belief was shattered, at least for a moment, at TCU in 1948. On an early possession the ball was centered back and past our punter, Darrell Royal, who was lucky to fall on it in the end zone, giving TCU a safety.

The score changed six or seven times, and with two minutes to go, OU, with a 21-6 lead, had the ball on its own 10-yard line, fourth and ten. To our amazement, Jack lined up the team in T-formation, took the ball and ran back into the end zone where he promptly slipped and fell on the wet grass.

We were stunned, and I'm sure would have throttled our hero who appeared to have done the unforgivable. TCU got another safety, Royal punted from the 20 and the Sooners easily held TCU and their talented tailback, Lindy Berry, for the rest of the game.

The safety, of course, was intentional, a play called, I heard, by Gomer Jones, but we uninitiated didn't know that. Jack Mitchell was quickly back on the throne.

The criss-cross play he and Darrell Royal used on punt returns was a thing of beauty. Sometimes I think sports seemed to be in a better perspective then. Thanks for the memories.

*William R. Burkett, '50 L.L.B.  
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma*