

**I**t is 1:45 on a Thursday afternoon, and Paul Massad is running late. As minutes tick by, members of his staff gather in his office, ready to pounce. Memos in hand, they help themselves to his red licorice, Massad's stress reliever of choice since his quadruple bypass surgery a few years ago.

Just as his secretary is about to page him one more time, he strides purposefully through the door snatching memos from outstretched hands on his way to his desk. Before he sits down, the executive director of alumni affairs and associate vice president for University development will have acknowledged his visitors, read the staff notes, issued directives and returned two phone calls.

After serving as a one-man human resource to OU presidents from George Lynn Cross to David L. Boren, Massad still displays the energy and enthusiasm of an intern. Throughout the years, he has gained knowledge of the University and its people so pervasive that when the administration began its campus beautification campaign, President Boren quipped, "If we need a historical monument, we can always put Paul Massad out on the north oval."

Although the president was dead-on in his assertion that a talking Massad statue would greatly enhance a visitor's appreciation for the University, the idea has one major flaw: They would have to catch him first, not to mention make him stand still.

"I travel about three days a week," he says. "You don't interact with people sitting in your office. I try to attend as many alumni and development functions as I can." With 49 percent of OU graduates living out of state, Massad has racked up his share of frequent flyer miles over the years.

A junior college transfer student from Lawton, Massad arrived at the University in 1956, bent on a degree in science. The outgoing Massad quickly realized life in a laboratory was not for him. He traded his test tubes for a typewriter, enrolling in the School of Journalism. During his senior year, David A. Burr, then assistant to President Cross and later an OU vice president, offered him a temporary position in the president's office.

"They were so very good to me. Seven months later when I finished the project and got my degree, I went over to say good-bye," recalls Massad. "I started getting all teary-eyed, and either David or President Cross took pity on me and said, 'Why don't you stay?' I don't think either one realized I'd still be on the payroll today," he adds with a laugh. "They were probably just asking me to stay for a cup of coffee."

The young graduate rolled up his sleeves and went to work in public relations and media information. He later served as business manager for OU's radio station, WNAD, and in continuing education, before becoming director of high school relations in 1966.

"I was very fortunate to have mentors like David Burr, who let me maneuver around to find the areas where I was most comfortable. We found out it was dealing with the public." From watching Cross and Burr, Massad says he learned a hands-on approach to dealing with people.

It was a lesson he never forgot. Even after he became director of development in 1979, Massad liked to get directly involved with students whenever he had the chance. One afternoon, a man and his son shuffled uncertainly into the Office of Development, telling the receptionist they had come to enroll in the University but had gotten lost. Before the man had a chance to ask directions, Massad had rounded his desk and offered



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A top administrator in both alumni affairs and development, Paul D. Massad, left, with Associate Alumni Director Marian Brown, has been opening the University's door to visitors for more than 40 years.

himself as their personal guide.

"It was late in the day, and I knew it was going to be tough getting through enrollment," Massad remembers. "But I said, 'Give me your letter of admission, and we'll see what we can do.'" It was obvious from the look on the father's face they had not even begun the admission process, and it was already 4 p.m.

"The son was completely overwhelmed," Massad recalls. "So we set off together across campus—and this is why I love this place so much. Admissions admitted him; University College advised him; and Registration sectioned him—all in less than two hours. It was nearly 6 p.m. when the people in those offices got to go home that night, but I think we all knew that if he had left without being enrolled, we would have lost him."

Two weeks later, Massad was surprised to see the father back in his office. "I'm not an OU grad, but I wanted to say thank you," he told Massad, handing him an envelope. Inside, the director of development was stunned to find a sizable donation to Sarkeys Energy Center.

"If we could trace the origin of all the gifts to our Reach for Excellence Campaign, somewhere along the line, nearly all of them would intersect with Paul," says Dave Maloney, vice president for development. "Something Paul did for someone 20 years ago can materialize into a gift today. He goes above and beyond what people would do in the name of stewardship. He doesn't have just 40 years at a job; he has 40 years' worth of friends."

Alumni Brian and Sandra O'Brien, of Houston, echo that sentiment. "Paul is one of the most effective fund raisers the University has ever known," says Brian. "But he never strong-arms you," adds Sandra. "He is more like a close friend. We sent our four children to OU, and two more besides because we knew Paul would take care of them."

After nearly four decades at the University, Massad is not one to rest on his laurels, although he has plenty of

laurels on which to rest. In recognition of his exceptional commitment to OU, Massad was honored with the Distinguished Achievement and Service Award in 1994, during the University's 104<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration.

Another highlight came in 1997. During an October meeting with President Boren and the OU Board of Regents, Massad had been warned that the Regents were on their way up to his office and that he had better make sure things were orderly.

"When I got up to the fourth floor of the Union, they motioned me down the hall, and there were President Boren and all the Regents, and they were standing in this beautifully renovated conference room. The President unveiled a plaque and BAM! I couldn't believe it. The Paul D. Massad Conference Room. They had completely trumped me. I was speechless."

With the approach of the big 4-0 on the job, friends and co-workers speculate over his retirement plans. "It would be a loss to the University," says J. Denny Bartell, OU alumnus and Houston oilman. "Everywhere you go in the United States, if you mention OU, people

say, 'Do you know Paul Massad?' He has tremendous contacts. He can cut across channels in 15 minutes to do a job that would take other people a month. My honest-to-God opinion is that Paul will never retire."

Although the 5-foot 6-inch Massad jokes that the job is wearing him down ("I used to be 6-foot-one," he quips), the topic of retirement does not interest him.

"It's hard to get burned out when you go into the field, and you see the enthusiasm people have for this institution. They turn you on," explains Massad. "I think the best part of my career has been my involvement with students. Now I watch their children and grandchildren come here and have successful careers. That's what OU is all about . . . a bunch of people working to make a great university even better."

—LYNETTE LOBBAN



At a pre-game football luncheon in fall 1999, Alumni Executive Director Paul Massad, right, does what he does best—working the crowd—in this case, represented by Norman residents, banker Chuck Thompson, left, and Dr. Bill Silman.

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