

Things We Remember

Re: English placement tests

They were still giving those when I went to OU. You failed to mention that the top-rated students were put in Reserve English.

I am putting this magazine aside with the intention of trying the test. But it is probably like the designation, CPA. Those letters stand for Couldn't Pass Again.

One thing I remember about that class. The professor recited this "poem":

The melancholy days have come,
The saddest of the year:
A little too hot for whisky,
A little too cold for beer.

*Roy A. Beaver, 41 bs bus
Corpus Christi, Texas*

Rewarded for Passing

The English Placement Test of 1937 (Fall 2000) was of great interest to me. I was one of those 1,131 freshmen who took the test in September 1937. I not only passed, but was selected to English 1A. Dr. Levy did not mention the reward for doing well on this test. Perhaps this information was not available to him. If nearly one-fourth failed, it would interest me to know how many made it into the advanced group.

English 1A was not advanced standing, nor did we get any special notation on our transcripts. The content of English 1 was grammar and composition. Those who wrote a good theme on the exam and scored well on the rest were deemed to be well enough grounded in grammar to skip further training in the basics and to proceed directly into composition. It was our privilege to write a theme every week, varying in length according to the objective of the assignment, with the last being like a term paper. The final, if I remember correctly, was written extemporaneously on some subject assigned as we walked in the door. I made an A in the three-hour course and the same for the following semester, also a three-hour course. That may seem like bragging, but I have waited sixty-three (plus) years to mention it.

Several people have conducted studies and concluded the study of

grammar is counter productive and, in fact, such arguments can be found in every classroom, put forward by students to object to what they feel is drudgery. Parsing, diagramming, and other such studies of the use of our language develop analysis and reasoning, abilities which surely can be utilized everywhere in life. Learning to abide by rules isn't such a bad idea either.

Thank you for this series of stories. I have enjoyed them all.

*Mary Ruth (Culbert) Heath, 41 ba journ
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma*

Science in the Original

Professor of History David Levy continues remarkable service to the University in each *Sooner Magazine*. Given his task as keeper and hence molder of institutional history, his selection of subjects is as important as the subjects themselves. Levy's latest triumph ("Teachers and Books," Summer 2000) was the story on the University's almost unparalleled History of Science Collection, its founder, Everett DeGolyer, and its founding curator, Dr. Duane H. D. Roller. As a University Scholar at OU, I was given the suggestion by Dr. Steve Sutherland, director of the Scholars Program, that I enroll in a class—any class—taught by Dr. Roller. I did, and he became both a friend and a mentor.

DeGolyer's interest in the developing field of History of Science, itself a part of the History of Ideas, led him to insist that Dr. George Cross create a *program*, or a *Department* of History of Science in order to receive his priceless books. DeGolyer also realized that the power of science was connected to that remarkable technology of the printing press and its ability to disseminate information to would-be scientists and technologists. The Collection itself—a collection, to my knowledge, consisting exclusively of machine printed books rather than handwritten manuscripts—is a laboratory where working historians of science, scientists, philosophers, and intellectual historians can, by examining the earliest printed materials, more easily "stand on the shoulders of giants," to use Sir Isaac Newton's

phrase.

Only by carefully examining the earlier texts can we note the changes. We can sometimes trace an idea, erroneous or valid, to its source. We learn from both the errors and the corrections often supplied by someone other than the author, and often *incorrectly* supplied. An example from the Collection comes easily to mind: its invaluable copy of Copernicus's paradigm-shifting *De Revolutionibus* (The Revolutions of the Heavens) reveals that it was "re-called" (by the Church, no doubt) and edited by interlineation to add the word "hypothesis" to vital chapter headings that implied that the motion of the earth was a physical truth, in order to emphasize that the earth's motion was just a hypothesis.

DeGolyer's collection, priceless and irreplaceable though it was, would not have grown and produced further knowledge had it not been for Dr. Roller. Roller's passion for ideas inspired his efforts to fill gaps, provide correctives, and nurture the dialogues among the books themselves. As he built the collection, his colleagues in the Department of History of Science built the department. His protégée, Dr. Marilyn Ogilvie, continues his stewardship and passion unabated, albeit more diplomatically. That this collection has survived and grown is not only a tribute to Dr. Roller's mentoring, skillful buying, and multilingual continental haggling, but also to University presidents who have understood its value—notably Dr. Cross, Dr. Paul Sharp, and now Dr. David Boren (and Molly Boren as well.)

Both Dr. Levy's prose and Dr. Roller's quotations reminded me of one of Dr. Roller's basic teachings, and one contained in his essay chosen to lead *The World of Ideas*, the important book edited by Dr. Cross himself and enclosed in a time capsule (although still available in the library as time capsules have not yet turned out to be as important as we thought they might be). In this essay, Dr. Roller, though not a philosophic relativist by any means—some ideas are more useful than others—expressed his discomfort with the

idea of science as truth: "Expressed a little more bluntly, no piece of scientific knowledge can be shown to be true."

Indeed, Dr. Roller was always skeptical of those who claimed they—or even science at any given point—had the answer. It was this skepticism that uniquely qualified him to search for ideas that "better explained natural phenomena." Once, in desperation after he expressed the view that History of Science had taught him little or nothing that might be thought of as "true," I asked him why he even bothered with the discipline. "Because it's interesting," he said. He might have further explained his answer by saying that it was "beautiful." Indeed, in a provocative article in the British Journal *Leonardo*, Dr. Roller once argued that it was the Greek quest for beauty through Plato's idealism and Aristotle's naturalism that was the engine of Western Science—or really modern science itself. He concluded that although artistic societies had developed that were not scientific, the history of science had not, so far, revealed that science had flourished in societies without the arts.

Through DeGolyer, and his gift which brought Dr. Roller to Norman, we see how the History of Science contributes to, as Cardinal Newman would term it, "the Idea of a University." Indeed, the history of this collection helps to "better explain," and expound, that dynamic concept that is the University of Oklahoma.

*Robert Henry, 74 ba, 77 jd
Judge, United States Court of Appeals
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma*

Correction Warranted

In the Fall 2000 edition of the *Sooner* on page 31, you offer reviews of several University Press books, including George W. Neill's *Infantry Soldier*. That review includes the sentence, "Those men of the 99th Division carried an enormously disproportionate burden; representing only six percent of the U.S. Army in Europe, they suffered 83 percent of the casualties."

This appears to be a distortion of the University Press' review of the

book. It says, "*Infantry Soldier* describes in harrowing detail the life of the men assigned to infantry rifle platoons during World War II. Few people realize the enormously disproportionate burden these men carried: although only six percent of the U.S. Army in Europe, the rifle platoons suffered most of the casualties."

I ask that you print a correction.

The review in the *Sooner* does a disservice to those who served in all the other Infantry Divisions' Rifle Platoons, and it is unfair to Mr. Neill to leave it uncorrected.

*John D. Sullivan, 70 bs civil engr
Houston, Texas*

Editor's Note: As Alumnus Sullivan states, Author George W. Neill's casualty figures referred to all the U.S. Army rifle platoons in Europe, not the 99th Division alone.

College of Law Ranking

I read in the "Prologue" section of the Fall 2000 issue of *Sooner Magazine* where OU's law school was ranked among the top 15 in the country. This is remarkable! But I am curious where this information came from? That is, what organization or publication ranked us at this level. This is great, but why didn't you state the source? OU's Price College of Business is in the top 50 by the International Association for Management Education and was published in *U.S. News*.

*John T. Samaras, 52 bba, 75 phd
Carrollton, Texas*

Editor's Note: The OU College of Law ranked 15th in the "value index" of Judging the Law Schools, second edition, by Thomas E. Brennan, former Chief Justice of Michigan, and Don DeLuc, dean of the Thomas M. Cooley

Where Credit Is Due

The photographs of the Oklahoma City National Memorial and the Butzer family that appeared on pages 5-9 in the fall 2000 issue of *Sooner Magazine* ("To Touch the Human Spirit") are the copyrighted work of Anthony Lindsey/ALLproof.

Law School. The Thomas M. Cooley Law School's 2000 national rankings—the Program Achievement Ratings—list OU 15th. PARs compare the reported entering class profile of each school to its bar results.

Alzheimer's Story Helpful

Could I obtain 20 copies of the article entitled "No Quick Fix for Alzheimer's Disease" that was published in the Fall 2000 issue? My interest in Alzheimer's is prompted by my work as a volunteer in my church, The Heights Baptist Church in Richardson, Texas. I serve as chairman of the Homebound Committee, composed of approximately 25 people who are each assigned to visit specific individuals where they live and who range in age from mid-fifty to over ninety. Many of them have dementia and/or Alzheimer's disease.

I strive to keep our committee members well informed on the nature, cause, and effects of the ailments of those to whom we minister. I would expect to make copies of the requested article available to the committee members and to discuss it at one of our monthly meetings.

*Lewis L. Burton, 50 bs mech engr
Richardson, Texas*

Passions for Life

While snowed in for Christmas 2000, I read straight through the Fall 2000 *Sooner Magazine*. The lives shared in the stories were interesting and informative. As I closed the back cover, I sensed that these lives were also instructive for me.

Hans Butzer said, "I would call architecture, for me, a passion as well as a mission. . . . My father is a geographer, and his interests are passions."

Sherri Coale, the basketball coach, was quoted, "I think passion is so important in life, and it's important to me to do whatever I do as well as I possibly can. When you are passionate about something, the deeper you dig into it, the better it gets."

These two young people convinced me that I can choose to add more passion to the remaining tasks of my life.

*John C. Westervelt, 50 bs elect engr
Tulsa, Oklahoma*