



# LETTERS

## Navy V-12 Engineers at OU

As a former engineering student at OU, I thoroughly enjoyed your article on OU engineering during the past 100 years. As a student during 1943-45, may I offer some information on events during that period to supplement your discussion?

It was a unique time at OU and Norman area generally. The Navy presence was everywhere. The NROTC is the only program which remained after the war. The Army Specialized Training Program was on campus until 1944. You saw very few male civilian students.

I was in the Navy V-12 college training program, an innovative activity, which permitted college students in civilian life to continue their education, without being drafted, and furnished colleges with a welcome source of students. We served in uniform as an Apprentice Seaman, receiving \$50 per month, with all expenses paid by the Navy. Upon graduation with a degree, we were sent to midshipman school for a commission and then assigned to a duty station.

NROTC students received their Navy commissions with their degrees because of the Navy courses taken while in school.

Most of the V-12 students arrived at the Norman rail station in July 1943 on a World War I train. It had slowly traveled from the West Coast, picking up future V-12 sailors along the way. Since the University had not completed the new concrete dorms, we were assigned temporary quarters in off-campus, empty fraternity houses. They were crowded, hot, without air conditioning. The campus fountains were dry because of the heat and water supply shortage. The capacity of local water facilities lagged behind the demands of the newly arrived Navy.

The first few days on campus, we stood in lines to report in to headquarters, receive uniforms and vaccinations, and select our engineering majors. Most of us had completed one year of pre-engineering.

Felgar Hall was the only engineering building. William Carson was Dean

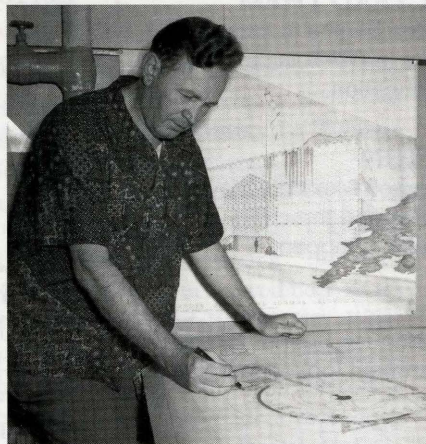
of Engineering. Despite the loss of some faculty serving in the military, engineering departments were blessed with senior faculty, who provided an excellent education.

During 1943-45, campus activities continued with full participation by the Navy students. These included sports, the selection of St. Pat, the Engineers Ball, and the coronation of the queen. The Engineers Club was active, including painting the Law Barn green! Also, the sailors quickly found out where the sororities were located!

We were given unofficial liberty to attend the OU-Texas football game in Dallas. It required hitchhiking because car ownership by Navy students was not permitted. The only way the sports teams could travel to their games was for the coaches to pool their gas stamps and drive their own cars. Some trips were as far as Austin, Texas, and Lincoln, Nebraska.

Hopefully, some of my remarks will bring back fond memories to alumni attending OU during World War II.

*Jack J. Coe, '45 civil eng  
Camarillo, California*



Bruce Goff at OU in 1948.

## Bruce Goff Memories

Just received my Fall 2010 *Sooner Magazine* and was delighted to see the articles about Bruce Goff. I enrolled at OU in 1947 mostly because I wanted to be an architect, and my high school advisor had heard of Prof. Goff and said "it would be a great experience studying under someone connected to Frank Lloyd Wright."

I made it into my sophomore year until Prof. Goff, standing at my drawing board, said, "Why is it everything you design looks like a shoebox?" It wasn't long after that, with the advice of Mendel Glickman, that I transferred into Structural Engineering, graduating in 1952.

I also still have a painting I did in Gene Bavinger's class. As they say, the rest is history. Wonderful teacher(s), wonderful times.

*Burton Stern, '52 eng  
Sarasota, Florida*

## Reflections on a Mentor

One of the true pleasures of my really good life, which could only be improved if it were being lived in Norman, is to receive your *Sooner Magazine*, which lets me partially pretend that I'm actually there and especially to read the always informative and beautifully written frontispiece by CJB. In fact, probably numerous other readers may have written to you saying how much they would enjoy an amplification of your current piece ["Prologue," Fall 2010] describing in more detail the many academic honors accorded to our Sooners.

Additionally what was of special interest to me and surely to his legion of life-long admirers were the articles describing the many accomplishments of my mentor, Bruce Goff, and his astonishing and enduring creative ability and perhaps most of all the admiration felt by every student whose professional career was touched—and changed—by his always gracious, encouraging, challenging friendliness and personal interest. Perhaps to everyone fortunate enough to have sat beside his desk watching him draw and sketch; to have left the North Base School of Architecture late on a Friday night to go to the Sooner Theatre to watch a "Duke" Wayne movie, which he loved; or to have been privileged to be at his "séances" on other evenings to hear his astonishing collection of contemporary and certainly esoteric music unlike any anywhere. You were kind to mention another totally dedicated believer, Jerri Bonebrake, who would unhesitatingly propose him for Sainthood . . . as would I if I only knew how!

*Charles W. Ward, '50 arch  
Tulsa, Oklahoma*

## Just an Inside Story

Last evening I read with interest your article on Bruce Goff, "Inside Bruce Goff's Creative Mind," in the Fall 2010 *Sooner Magazine*. It was a very well written and informative piece. One fact caught my eye, "The Ledbetter House at 701 West Brooks...was featured on the cover of *Life Magazine* in 1948." Having lived in Norman for years, and presently living down the street from the Ledbetter House, I decided I wanted to read this article. After searching online, I found that the Ledbetter House was indeed featured in the June 28, 1948, edition of *Life Magazine*, but using only the Internet I could not ascertain if this was the cover story or not. As a librarian at the OU Bizzell Memorial Library, I decided to consult the print source in the library to confirm this. I checked the library shelf and indeed found the bound paper copy of the June 28, 1948, edition of *Life Magazine*, which has the article on the Ledbetter House on pages 71-74 ("Consternation and Bewilderment in Oklahoma"). The cover is of a youth from the Kent School Crew, not the Ledbetter House.

*Jeffrey M. Wilhite, '90 ba; '93 ml  
Norman, Oklahoma*

## Age of the Universe

Bill Woodward calls "preposterous" a statement from your Summer 2010 issue ["Physicists on the Frontier"] concerning what "we now know" about the age of the universe on the grounds that scientists estimate and model but never "know." True, but the distinction is lost on a population in which (according to a sequence of Gallup polls spanning two decades) over 40 percent believe the truly preposterous notion that the earth is under 10,000 years old. (<http://www.gallup.com/poll/145286/Four-Americans-Believe-Strict-Creationism.aspx>)

There is plenty of skepticism about science in America. We scientists don't need to gin up more of it by pointing out subtle differences that are sure to be lost on the general public.

*Rex Page  
Professor of Computer Science  
University of Oklahoma*

## Support for the Big Bang

It was amusing to read Mr., excuse me, Dr. Woodward's, letter in the Fall 2010 issue about the dating of the Big Bang. After all, such an eminent physicist as the Pope Benedict XVI himself subscribes to the Big Bang in spite of the fact that according to Bishop James Ussher, about the XVII century, the world was created in 4004 BCE. Oh, well, the few million years are really irrelevant for those of us who have to cope with current problems.

*Leon W. Zelby  
Professor Emeritus  
University of Oklahoma  
Norman, Oklahoma*



Owen Hewett at the OU track facility.

## Bully's Story Inspires

As I read magazines and the Tulsa newspaper, I look for inspiring stories. One of the best ever was "'Bully' Kept His Life on Track" in the Fall 2010 *Sooner Magazine*. A victim of cerebral palsy and the parents of a victim would be given new hope upon reading Bully's story of becoming the manager of the track team while a student at OU.

*John C. Westervelt, '50 bsee  
Tulsa, Oklahoma*

## Bald Eagle Sighting

For over a week, I have spotted a Bald Eagle, perched in an old cottonwood tree located at the side of a lake that sits behind my home. It is usually there in the afternoons. The lake is just south of Memorial and east of Council Road. I have tried to get close to it to take a picture, but she/he is very aware of the surroundings and takes flight before I can make my way over close enough that my camera will get a decent pic.

I saw information in the latest [Fall 2010] *Sooner Magazine* Letters section entitled "Ground Control to Major Mom." I rarely read the Letters portion but saw the picture of the two chicks.

I will be making a donation to support the efforts [of OU's Sutton Avian Research Center] to reintroduce these awesome birds to our state.

*Gale Wood  
Oklahoma City  
Oklahoma*

## From One Who Knows

It was a pleasure to see the Fall 2010 *Sooner Magazine* "Prologue" celebrating Sarah [Swenson]'s wonderful Rhodes achievement and the leaders at OU—such as Dr. [Melanie] Wright, Dr. [Nancy] Mergler,

President [David] Boren, and many others—who have worked tirelessly to create an environment for students who will fight the world's fight. Thanks for highlighting academic excellence, a true Sooner tradition!

*Jason R. Sanders, MD, MBA  
Cambridge, Massachusetts*

*Editor's Note: Jason Sanders was OU's 2000 Rhodes Scholar. After earning his bachelor's in chemistry/biochemistry from OU, he received an MBA from Oxford University and his medical degree from Harvard.*