

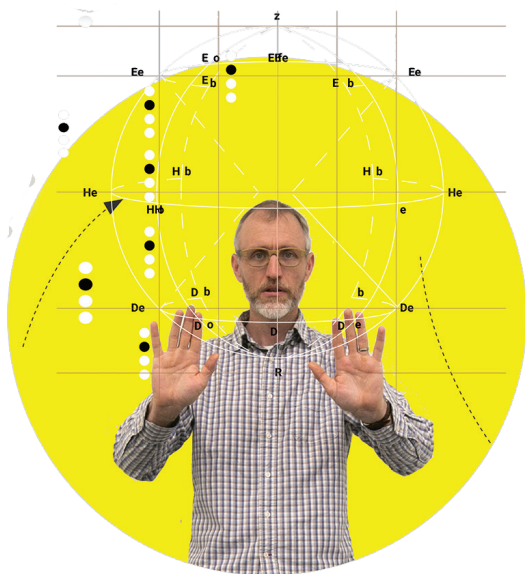
Your Letters

I believe the concept of “Lest We Forget . . .” is a great idea and I applaud you for taking the initiative to keep these professors in our memory.

Breaking the language barrier

Chip Minty’s piece regarding Chinese language and OU reminded me of my medical lecture in Beijing when I was Vice Head of Neurology at OU-Tulsa in 1997.

In 1985, I had accepted a dare from a fellow physician, and, on a lark, I began studying Mandarin. In 1997, a friend insisted I accompany him on his business trip to Beijing. He joked that he wanted to see how I would get along on the streets of Beijing. A couple of months before our trip, I had discussed this China opportunity with one of my former medical students, Xing Jian, who had grown up in Beijing, and he arranged for me to deliver a headache lecture at the General Hospital of the Air Force, where Jian’s father worked.



Although I was proficient in conversational Mandarin, I knew I could never deliver a scientific lecture in Chinese, so I used the services of a translator. However, after the lecture, I was escorted to a banquet in my honor, where I was comfortable putting my Chinese language skills to use. In Mandarin I toasted to the enduring friendship of the people of our two countries. I learned that on making the toast we turned the wine goblet up and swallowed the entire contents in one gulp. Immediately upon setting the wine glass down, one of the young servers rapidly refilled it, always brimming to the top, never spilling a single drop.

Somehow, near the end of the dinner, the subject of ancient Chinese poetry came up. These Chinese gentlemen could not have known that my Mandarin teacher had encouraged me to learn about some of the legendary traditional Chinese poets and their work. When one of the most fabled poets, Li Bai, was

mentioned, Mr. Ying asked if I knew any of his poems, so I deftly recited, in Mandarin, of course, one of Li Bai’s most famous poems, “Homesickness on a Quiet Night,” and my hosts all joined me in reciting the last two verses. Then, I spontaneously added that my favorite poem was “A Night Mooring at Maple Bridge,” one of the best-loved ancient Chinese poems, written by an otherwise obscure poet, Zhang Ji. After I flawlessly recited this, all my dinner mates were visibly captivated. I had arrived at 1:15 that afternoon, an unknown American, and at 6:15 I departed in a blaze of glory. On leaving, I made a mental note of the paradoxical scene during the ride back to the hotel: it was raining lightly, but the sun was shining. Perhaps, someday, I can write a poem and capture this theme.

*Harvey Blumenthal, M.D.
Tulsa, Okla.*

To read Dr. Blumenthal’s complete essay from the American Headache Society magazine, Headache, on his 1997 trip to China, visit <https://soonermag.oufoundation.org/stories/your-letters-6>.

Angie, Kate and Connie

Today’s post brought me the latest edition of *Sooner Magazine* and as I am wont to do, I opened same without delay. Perusing the issue, I noticed the article [Angie, Kate and Me] by Connie Cronley and, of course, began reading it *immediatement*.

As usual, her clear, succinct and engaging style made reading the essay a joy. The subjects are certainly worth the acknowledgment she bestowed upon them, and I herewith further congratulate her on the upcoming release of her biographical study of Ms. Barnard [*A Life on Fire: Oklahoma’s Kate Barnard*, due out in September from the OU Press].

However, I note one grievous error. A mere seven words, but nonetheless, it caused me such consternation as to give me pause to question the authenticity and accuracy of what was written. In the concluding paragraph (p. 15 of said issue), she penned these words:

I am an old woman myself now ...

As one who has passed, yea, opened the gates of octogenarian, Ms. Cronley may rest assured that ‘old’ is a destination afar from her present stage in life. Her articles and essays are full of youthful vigor and are the quintessential expressions of one who savors the uniqueness, follies and anomalies of life that one encounters in their life’s journey.

*John M. Sharp
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Dora McFarland and Stadium renovation recalled

My mother, Ruth Moore Memminger ('20 fa), was an instructor of piano in the 1920s and remembered well the request for donations to the stadium.

In 1922, Norman's YMCA building burned to the ground and its officials joined forces with the University in a movement for a student union. Since a stadium was also needed, the Board of Regents in 1925 appointed trustees for a combined stadium/union memorial fund.

Members of the University faculty were "encouraged" to donate \$250.00, in return for which they received a season ticket to all football games that would be good for their lifetimes, as long as it was renewed each year.

Ruth did so and claimed her 2-5-0 privilege for almost fifty years. In the years after her marriage to Charles Memminger ('14 bus; '33 law) in 1933 she sometimes commented, "Charlie may have gotten four season tickets, but one of them was mine—and by now, it's free!"

She was a great fan of OU football and continued to attend games until she was no longer able to make the trip from her home in Atoka to Norman. Then she followed all the games on radio and TV to the extent that she often refused a collect phone call from me if it was in the middle of a game.

When the west upper deck was completed in 1975, all seats in the center section of the lower level went up for auction. Ruth chose to give up the 50-yard line seats she and her husband had had for 37 years rather than accept a single ticket in a less desirable part of the stadium,

I was also delighted to read about Dora McFarland, who was my mother's best friend from the day they met in 1920—perhaps at a Theta function. Today, we would call them BFFs because the last time they saw each other was in September of 1987. Dora's companion had brought her to visit Mother, who was then living in an assisted facility in Edmond. I went out to say "hello" to Dora (as I was allowed to call her) but

only stayed about 15 minutes because they were immediately in deep conversation reminiscing and "catching up." I don't think either even realized I had left.

Dora died that November and Mother died the next March.

Caroline Memminger Kilgo
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Edmond, Okla.

I write you regarding the *Sooner Magazine* [Winter 2021] article on Dora McFarland. I was surprised when I opened the magazine and there she was! I believe the concept of "Lest We Forget . . ." is a great idea and I applaud you for taking the initiative to keep these professors in our memory. I enjoyed learning more about Ms. McFarland and her many life accomplishments.

Ms. McFarland was my favorite OU mathematics instructor. She taught my first semester of many dealing with "The Calculus." I attended a small high school in Anadarko, Okla., where plain geometry and trigonometry were the highest maths offered, so I required seven hours of non-degree qualifying mathematics at OU just to get into Ms. McFarland's class. My goal was to become an electrical engineer, which took a lot of mathematics. Without her encouragement, I doubt I would have made it. I thought she was an outstanding teacher, and I was fortunate to have had her in that first day of calculus class in 1961.

I completed about 28 hours of math at OU and I was able to keep my math grades just above the average required to be elected into Phi Mu Epsilon, the honorary mathematics fraternity. The annual banquet to honor new members into the group was held in May 1964. (I believe I was the only engineering major in the group.) I recently ran across my banquet program, and Dora McFarland attended as secretary of the fraternity.

After the 1982 death of my father, my mother met and married Dr. Philip J. Nolan in 1985. She was a good bridge player! Dr. Nolan was a legally blind professor who graduated from Cornell and came to OU in the mid-1950s. According to legend, he spoke nine languages and founded the Letters program at OU. He was well liked by many. He died of cancer in 1996. Dr. Nolan would make a good candidate for your column.

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