



Cedimir "Cheddy" M. Sliepcevich

AND THE NEW ERA IN ENGINEERING.

By David W. Levy

IN THE EARLY 1950S, OU's College of Engineering had two significant strengths and at least one troubling deficiency. Under Dean William Carson the College was graduating competent and well-rounded engineers—in addition to their professional training, Carson insisted they learn to write well, speak clearly, and take courses in the arts and sciences. Moreover, the dean received (and deserved) praise for the College's energetic efforts to find good jobs for its graduates.

The troubling deficiency was that both Carson and a significant number of his faculty were relatively indifferent to original research. While other engineering programs around the country were encouraging efforts to bolster national defense, compete for government grants, and enter into partnerships with industry, OU seemed to lag behind. President Cross was determined to rectify this weakness by finding and acquiring a first-class researcher. Carl Riggs, a young zoology professor (later Gradu-

ate College dean) recommended a friend from the University of Michigan. He was a chemical engineer named Cedimir Sliepcevich, but everyone called him "Cheddy"

Sliepcevich had come to Michigan from Montana, where his parents had settled after leaving Yugoslavia. He was a phenomenon at Michigan, finishing his B.S. degree in 1941 and his M.S. a year later. While working toward his Ph.D., he was asked to consult on projects ranging from atomic energy to high-pres-

sure gas sampling. Michigan's Research Institute hired him on classified projects, and that university had him teaching undergraduate and graduate courses in thermodynamics. The year he got his Ph.D. (1948), he was retained as an assistant professor.

The more OU people learned about Cheddy Sliepcevich, the more they wanted him. He came for an interview in June 1954, and captivated everybody who met him. He agreed to come as professor of Chemical Engineering and chair of the Department. There was talk of his becoming associate dean of the College, but it was agreed to give him a year to get acquainted before adding those duties. Tom Love, a colleague and historian of the College, says simply, "his leadership marked the start of a new era in the College of Engineering."

As associate dean, Sliepcevich was in charge of recruitment and immediately brought in a platoon of eager young researchers. He supervised the College's research activities and modernized both the graduate and the undergraduate curricula. When he left the dean's office (1962), Cross wrote him a personal note: "You [came to] a college that had become so complacent and so obsolescent that the administration and the Regents were deeply disturbed. In an unbelievably short time and, in spite of great financial stringencies, you had given the faculty a life-saving transfusion of fine young blood, had given the graduate program ... a life and vigor it had never known, and had brought the undergraduate program abreast of the times." When Carson retired from the deanship, Cross naturally wanted Sliepcevich to take over. But Cheddy had other ambitions.

His research was prodigious and monumental. He published around 170 professional papers. Under "Research Interests," his vita listed fifteen distinct fields that engaged his attention. He was involved in everything from blood flow in the human body (leading to dialysis) to the liquefaction and transport of natural gas. He was directly responsible for radical changes in several industries. In 1963, he was the youngest person to be named an OU George Lynn Cross Research Professor. One dean under whom he worked wrote, "He is the most effective, the most versatile, and the most productive engineer that I have ever known." Another dean called him, "one of the most distinguished faculty members ever to be associated with the University of Oklahoma."

At OU, Sliepcevic directed 52 Ph.D.s. He consulted with a multitude of private, state, and federal projects, and earned around \$4 million in grants. He took over (besides his many other duties) the General Engineering program and was its chair.

There is no space here to describe (or even list) the University, state and national awards that were showered upon him. His 2009 obituary lists no fewer than fourteen prestigious recognitions of his work. His dean remarked, "you collect honors like flypaper collects flies."

Over the years, many individuals have contributed to the current high reputation of the College of Engineering. But it would be hard to name anyone who had contributed more than Cedomir Sliepcevic. 📍

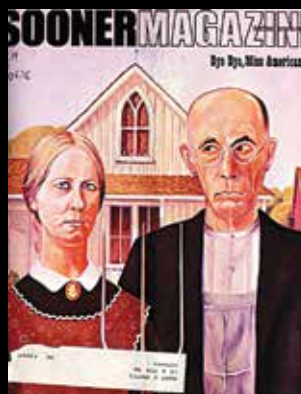
David W. Levy is Professor Emeritus of the OU History Department and has written two books on OU history.



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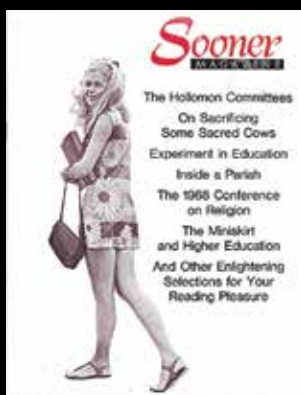
May 1965



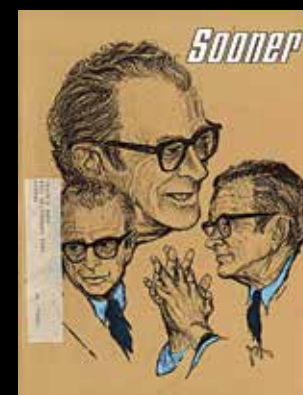
Summer 1972



Winter 1972



May 1968



May/June 1971

Sooner Style

A stash of *Sooner Magazine* from the 1960s and early '70s resurfaced during a renovation project at Oklahoma Memorial Union. Groovy, no? If you have memories to share, e-mail us at sooner magazine@ou.edu.