

Dean Fredrik Holmberg, one of the most beloved and respected of the veteran University faculty members is shown here at his desk. Throughout a third of a century he has guided thousands of students in their effort to express themselves artistically. He is the father of almost every one of the musical, dramatic and artistic organizations now in existence on the campus.

Dean Holmberg

By MARY KIMBROUGH, '34



THIRTY-TWO years ago, a young man stepped from the doorway of the Grand hotel, peered through the ever-present dust, and with his violin tucked securely under his arm, started the long trek toward the state hospital at the east end of Main street in Norman.

But this particular young man was not a prospective patient at the hospital, neither was he a travelling musician in search of an audience. He was Fredrik Holmberg, today, dean of the college of fine arts, but then a newly hired instructor in the University of Oklahoma.

It was in the year 1902 that Holmberg, then a member of the faculty at Bethany College in Lindsborg, Kansas, learned that the University of Oklahoma was to be one of the football opponents that year. He hadn't realized before that such an institution was in existence, but he immediately perceived the unbounded opportunities ready for the man who was willing to leave the more populous centers of comfort, and come to the desolate and barren plains of young Oklahoma. Although he didn't know the name of the president of the university, he managed to direct an application to him and was promptly engaged as teacher of violin and harmony at the munificent annual salary of six hundred dollars.

On the first day of September, 1902, he was on his way to his new home. A wag asked him if he intended to locate on the east or west side of town, and knowing nothing of the plan of Norman, he didn't see the significance of the joke. However, he was soon to find out, rather forcibly. Because the hospital ground was the only property that even faintly resembled his idea of a college campus, he decided that therein lay his new situation

and he immediately set forth in search of the president and a few college students.

"I didn't think that the people looked much like a school crowd," Dean Holmberg recalls. "I saw no one who had the earmarks of a college professor, nor did I notice anyone who looked like a student. Having almost arrived at the buildings, I asked a man if this were the University of Oklahoma. He immediately answered, 'Hell, no! This is the bug house!'"

The man was kind enough, however, to advise him to wait until the dust cleared and he would be able to see the college in the southwest corner of the town.

The disappointed young man did wait until the dust cleared, but even then he had to strain his eyes to see the University of Oklahoma. He walked about a mile and a half in the dust and heat that only September in Oklahoma can muster and arrived at the scene of his new position. He was terribly disappointed that in the single educational edifice, only one wing had been finished. Ready to turn back and resign his position, he chanced to meet Dr. David Ross Boyd, the president. Because Dr. Boyd was one of those optimistic souls who could always see the brighter side of every unpleasant situation, and because Holmberg, in spite of the rebuffs and disappointments he had met on his adventure, still retained the pioneer spirit that led him to apply for the position, he was persuaded to stay and do his best.

And no one could have done better. Within six weeks, he had organized a men's glee club, a women's glee club, an oratoria chorus, a band and an orchestra. He had interested six students in the study of violin, and several more expressed a desire to learn harmony and theory. Professor and Mrs. H. Gulick were also

connected with the fine arts department at that time, teaching piano, theory, and dramatic reading.

In the one building that housed the University, there were only eighty students of college status. There were many, though, who were taking high school work in the preparatory school. Of these, the majority had made the run into Oklahoma with their parents and had had no opportunity to attend high school.

Dean Holmberg has seen the development of Oklahoma from a crude prairie state into one of the leading commercial centers of the southwest. He retains a vivid memory of the colorful people in the young state and gives a sidelight on the famous Oklahoma run, one of the most important events in southern history.

"I found the population of Oklahoma different from any other that I had known anything about," he relates. "Other states were somewhat colonized, that is, the people came in groups either from older states or foreign countries, and in the new state would form communities of the same nationality with the same interests as well as the same ideas. In Oklahoma, this was not true at all. On a certain day at a set time, Uncle Sam shot off a pistol, and the preacher, salesman, carpenter, college graduate, illiterate, the lawyer, horse thief, everyone, just made a run and staked down lots or farms side by side, and out of that conglomeration, Oklahoma was formed. It stands to reason, therefore, that in the matter of fine arts there would be a small sprinkling of people who were genuinely interested, but the majority had never, seemingly, cared or had any inclination to look for the beautiful things in life. There was, of course, no fine arts center developed at that time, and so the

door was wide open, and it was merely a question of taking advantage of this situation. I soon found that one could start anything in Oklahoma, and there would be no particular opposition to it, but that once a thing was started, it was almost suicide not to be able to carry it on."

And so it was as a missionary that Holmberg came to Oklahoma. To him was thrown the challenge to pioneer in the field of fine arts, to give to the people of this new state a love and appreciation of the beauties of life. He is amazed at the rapid strides the University has been able to make in such a few years. He has seen it grow from a small institution, crowded into one ugly building, into one of the greatest universities of the southwest, boasting a lovely campus over which are scattered many monuments to education, and through whose doors daily pass thousands of young people.

Although campus politics today create a stir during most of the year, until 1908, the students had never delved into any political struggles. It was in 1907 that Oklahoma was granted statehood, and, as was natural, the young people followed in the footsteps of their elders and soon were campaigning for their favorites on the campus. It was also during that year that Holmberg became director of the newly organized School of Fine Arts, and in 1910, he was named Dean, the title which he holds today.

Holmberg has never ceased in his efforts to make the department recognized as one of the outstanding colleges of the southwest. As early as 1904, he began a campaign for the University, employing concerts and plays as drawing cards to prospective students.

But in spite of his efforts, the news of the newly organized department did not reach the ears of some of Oklahoma's citizenry. In fact, as late as 1914, when he was visiting in the home of a physician in one of the larger towns in eastern Oklahoma, he discovered that the doctor's wife, who had lived in the state for ten years, had never heard of a University of Oklahoma.

Dean Holmberg has, however, reached the homes of thousands of people, not only through personal visits on tours, but also through the praise and sincere admiration expressed by his students. He has had to undergo the hardships of every pioneer, but he has succeeded in building up a College of Fine arts that today enjoys a wide reputation.

"One of the interesting things in connection with the College of Fine Arts at the University of Oklahoma is that it stands in a different position in relation to the state and to the University itself from that of similar institutions in other states because very little had been done to develop the state toward an appreciation for fine arts when the run into the state came," he explains.

"In fact, we got off with the lead open



Here is the six-inch clay paper weight designed by Phantom Mask, honorary radio drama organization, to be given its members instead of keys or pins. The clay emblems are being made by the Frank-home Potteries of Norman.

and Joe Benton, who as Giuseppe Bentonelli, is thrilling thousands with the beauty of his voice, were listed in the undergraduate rolls at the University of Oklahoma, and all have been led and inspired by Dean Fredrik Holmberg.

Can a finer tribute be paid to any man?



Ten of the Best

Dean Holmberg recently selected the following University alumni as the ten outstanding graduates of the University of Oklahoma fine arts college.

William G. Schmidt,'12music, head of the University of Oklahoma department of voice.

Joseph Benton,'20as,'21fa, Chicago Civic Opera tenor, radio soloist and operatic favorite of Italy.

Virginia George,'26voice, Oklahoma City radio soloist.

Ernest Sharpe,'27as, stage and screen vocalist and actor, now known as Eric Rhodes.

Wilda Griffin,'27fa,'33music, instructor in voice at the University and soloist in many classical and semi-classical productions.

John Richards,'30music, voice teacher and glee club director at Sand Springs.

E. Van Heflin,'32as, Broadway actor who is playing in "The Night Remembers" this winter in New York City.

Muriel Monsell,'32drama, screen actress and performer with the Pasadena Community Playhouse.

J. Forrest West,'33music,'33voice, fine arts faculty member at Central State Teachers college, Edmond, and operatic singer.

Joe Callaway,'34ex, actor with the Globe Theatre which recently closed a summer's run at the Chicago World's fair and started a tour of the west.

for anything we cared to do. In older states some community which happened to be interested in fine arts would form its own school and there were private schools located over the entire states, but in Oklahoma there were none of these. As it is here, the College of Fine Arts has grown up with the University as a whole, and because of this early start, it has had an opportunity to make itself felt both on the campus and throughout the state to an extent that with one or two exceptions has not been possible in other states. In other words, we were naturally given a certain amount of leadership without so much as having to ask for it."

Perhaps no greater evidence of a teacher's influence and success can be cited than the accomplishments of his students. Men and women, who as undergraduates distinguished themselves in their chosen fields of fine arts, are today appearing before thousands of people and bringing honor to themselves, to their school, and to the man who made that school possible.

Such names as Spencer Norton, instructor in piano, Wilda Griffin, instructor in voice, Joe Callaway, continuing his dramatic art work on the professional stage,

Truman Tomlin

Truman Tomlin,'34ex, whose "Object of My Affection" may be heard at almost any hour of day or night over the nation's radio airways, has signed a motion picture contract and is slated to be a movie "funny man."

He was offered the contract after a remarkably swift rise to popularity as a radio singer. Less than a year ago, he was a student in the law school and was singing with a campus band.

Tomlin, who wrote the popular song, "The Object of My Affection," while he

was a student, joined Jimmy Grier's orchestra and was an immediate favorite as a singer and humorist.

The song is one of the most popular on the air this winter and Tomlin is scheduled to make a picture debut sometime during the year. The music was written, Tomlin declares, last year when he was living at the Delta Tau Delta house and was spending as much of his time as possible at the Chi Omega house where Mildred Miller, the object of his affection, lived.