

David St. Clair is believed to be the first Oklahoman ever to win a 'first' at Oxford University, an honor that rates as tops in academic achievement.

## A "first" at Oxford

DAVID ST. CLAIR, '33as, slipped quietly into Norman in late summer after a three-year absence, greeted friends warmly, was glad to talk about his experiences in Europe as a Rhodes scholar, or as a hitchhiker from New York to Norman, but said little about himself.

But some of Norman's Rhodes scholars of earlier days, who knew what questions to ask, soon unearthed some big news. St. Clair had won a "First" at Oxford.

Probably only the men who have climbed the steep intellectual path prescribed at Oxford can realize the full significance of his achievement. But all fellow Oklahomans can understand the fact that St. Clair is believed to be the first Oklahoman ever to win a degree at Oxford with first honors.

Its the "tops" in educational honors, and although St. Clair tried to explain it away as "a bit of luck," those who have been through Oxford know that his high ranking can be the result only of diligent and brilliant work.

This tall, lanky Sooner came away from Oxford with an alert mind, a deep interest in research in his chosen field—geology; a habit of speaking clearly and effectively but without any English accent; and with interesting views on European affairs.

During his first two years in England he found the country and the people "rather peculiar." But by the third year he began to gain an understanding of their ways of doing things. Some of the things that had seemed so peculiar began to make sense.

"The thing that impressed me most was the English people's sense of stability, and their vast experience in how to attack their problems," St. Clair said.

"It is remarkable how the capitalist

class, the well-to-do class which really rules England, actually feels responsibility for the country as a whole. Some of them may be supercilious toward the working man as an individual, but as a class they feel a strong responsibility for the welfare of the working people.

"The members of the capitalist class in England hurt themselves over and over by levying new taxes against themselves, and providing new welfare projects for the less fortunate classes.

"There is opposition, of course, but they talk things over and study the problem carefully for perhaps ten years, and then if it seems to be the logical thing to do they go ahead with it, even though it hurts their individual fortunes.

"That attitude of responsibility for the welfare of the nation as a whole struck me as being in sharp contrast to the situation in the United States. Here, when things start going the wrong way for the capitalists, instead of feeling some responsibility for the conduct of the government they simply say they will have nothing to do with it."

He found the Oxford educational system most stimulating—after he finally caught on.

"My tutor would tell me to read in a certain field for a week. 'All the standard books of course, and also this and this,' he would say. Then I could come back and he would say 'Well, you have got the surface material now, but don't you think you had better go into this angle and that angle? And also for this week you can start in on this field.' It was just an ever-widening circle of reading and research until finally I got into the habit of reading every possible thing that might have any bearing on my sub-

jects. Exhaustive study—that's the secret of it.

"There was never any textbook that you could read and say, 'Now I've got my lesson.' Everything had to come from a source book—the best and most complete knowledge on the subject that could be found."

The Oxford scholar can't attend lectures, take notes and expect to know all the answers. The lectures constitute only outlines of material in various fields. The student must fill in the actual material himself.

St. Clair was more ready to talk about his athletic experience than his scholastic achievements. He admitted taking a little pride in the fact that he made the crew of Queen's college. It was particularly gratifying because he had had little time for athletics while working his way through the University here—working at the Central State hospital for a time and in laboratories at the University.

His outstanding record won for him a research fellowship at Columbia university, New York, starting in September. His job is to do research on the Pleistocene period.

The project is sponsored by the International Geographical Union, and if sufficient funds are obtained, St. Clair will spend alternate years in America and in Europe trying to correlate geological findings made independently by geologists of the two continents.

Lack of standard research methods and lack of any system of correlation of findings have caused about ten different theories of Pleistocene geology to be developed, he explained. The international union hopes to make a fresh start in collecting data to be interpreted by unprejudiced scientists.

