



Bud Gentry, '15, beside one of the new black and white highway patrol cars

Making the highways safer

YOU survey the row of people waiting on a bench and are glad that you had the foresight to make an appointment in advance.

The secretary takes you in and introduces you to another secretary. In the inner waiting room are more people waiting. Some get discouraged and leave but more keep coming.

Finally three men come out of the inner office, and the inner secretary waves you in. But you are a split second late, and someone has come in a door from another direction and demanded attention. You wait some more.

That's how you meet J. M. "Bud" Gentry, '15, Oklahoma's first Commissioner of Public Safety and just about the busiest man in the state. That barrage of secretaries is no affectation with him—he has to have it in order to get any work done.

Smoking a big cigar, affable but straight-to-the-point, Mr. Gentry keeps the wheels moving fast in the newly created Department of Public Safety that will spread a highway patrol over Oklahoma beginning July 15, and will tackle the tremendous job of trying to reduce highway accidents.

Mr. Gentry is clear-cut and decisive in his thinking. Ask him what the program of his new department is, and he answers simply and directly: to reduce highway deaths.

The program involves a vast amount of detailed work—issuance of a driver's license to every automobile driver in the state, organization of a force of 125 carefully trained highway patrolmen, enforcement of traffic laws—but the whole pro-

gram has one simple theme, a fight against highway deaths.

The man who is tackling this job seems to have a real enthusiasm for it. As in the days back in 1914 when he was playing quarterback on the Sooner football team, he sees a goal ahead and he is using his head and all his energy to reach it.

After graduating from the University in 1915, Mr. Gentry went into the automobile business in Enid, and continued as a dealer for 16 years except for 22 months he spent in the army during the World War.

He spent twelve months in France as a member of the Thirty-Sixth Division, but he's matter-of-fact about that and won't even admit that anything exciting happened in France.

He has been in the lumber business in Oklahoma City, and still retains an interest in it.

In February, 1935, he was appointed a member of the State Highway Commission by Gov. E. W. Marland, and served on the Commission for two years. A few months after his resignation from the Highway Commission, he was appointed Commissioner of Public Safety to head the new department created by the last Legislature.

Outside of regular working hours, Mr. Gentry's chief recreation is flying. He has a sportsman pilot's license and is credited with 700 hours in the air. He has been flying since 1930. During that period he has had two planes, his present one being a Stinson cabin model.

Any exciting experiences as a flier? No, he can't seem to recall any.

Talking to this well poised man, you

begin to believe that anyone who went through a World war and has flown 700 hours in the air without anything exciting ever happening to him must be a "natural" for the job of safety commissioner.

Gentry has an opportunity that is almost unique in Oklahoma government of recent years. The law setting up the Department of Public Safety gives him a free hand to use the merit system in selecting his personnel for his department.

Applicants for positions on the highway patrol were first weeded out according to certain standards of physical fitness, experience and age. Then they were sent to a training school arranged at the University of Oklahoma in June in co-operation with the Extension Division.

The applicants were given instruction in the use of firearms, motorcycles, automobiles, army drill, calisthenics, methods of arrest, first aid, and believe it or not, public speaking!

Examinations were given, and officers were selected on a basis of grades they made.

"We are absolutely going to use the merit system," Mr. Gentry says. He says it quietly, but you gather that he really means it.

The training in public speaking is given so that the patrolmen can speak to school children, civic clubs and any interested groups on various phases of highway safety. Mr. Gentry sees his job as one of education as well as enforcement of the law.

When the first fifty men take their new black and white patrol cars out onto Oklahoma's highways July 15, and more join them later, they will be there to protect the good driver from the wild driver, Mr. Gentry emphasizes.

"We are going to make a determined effort to reduce the accident rate by 25 per cent during the next year," he declared. "There is a virgin field for enforcement of highway traffic laws. The new driver's license law makes it possible to register every driver and to start building up a record on each one. The driver with a bad record won't get to keep his license."

Here is how the safety program will affect the average Sooner alumnus who drives a car in Oklahoma:

Beginning July 15 there will be highway patrolmen covering all the principal highways of the state, and you can expect to run onto one of these black and white guardians of highway safety just any time and any place.

Beginning September 1, drivers will be requested to obtain their 1938 drivers' licenses, and all drivers in the state will be expected to have licenses by January 1, 1938. You will be subject to a \$10 fine if found driving without a license after that date.

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