



Portrait of a Sooner

A man never too busy to
serve his community is
Merle Woods, new head
of the Oklahoma Press

BECAUSE an ambitious young college student couldn't get any work in journalism at Baker University in Kansas, even after he got out and hustled up a prospective class of fifteen would-be journalists, he decided to come down to Oklahoma where things were a little more progressive and courses in journalism were already being taught at the state university.

The ambitious young man, H. Merle Woods, has never had cause to regret that change. He has been substantially successful as a newspaper publisher in Oklahoma, and now he is the president of the Oklahoma Press Association. Incidentally, when he was elected to the office at the recent meeting of the press association at Ada, he succeeded another Sooner graduate in the office — Harry Wimberly, '24, who is publisher of the *Altus Times-Democrat*.

Printer's ink has been in Merle Woods' blood for a long time. He was working in the office of the Welch Watchman, at the little town of Welch eighteen miles north of Vinita when he was only twelve years old.

He went to Baker University, at Baldwin, Kansas, for his college education. When he found that no courses in journalism were offered there, he decided to try to do something about it. School authorities told him that if he would get together fifteen students who wanted to take journalism they would start a class. But if the officials thought that would end the matter, they were badly mistaken. Young Woods showed up with his fourteen other students who said they would like to have a class in journalism.

When the authorities backed down and the promise of a journalism class fell through, he decided to move to the University of Oklahoma, having heard of the Journalism work offered there. He came to Norman in 1915, and soon was a staff member of the student newspaper. He was on the staff when the momentous change to daily publication created the *Oklahoma Daily*.

Like most *Daily* staff members, he became too absorbed in journalistic activities to do much else although he did manage to find time to play a clarinet in the University Band. He was assistant editor and editorial writer on the *Daily*, and also edited the *Oklahoma Weekly*, a publication sent out over the state for the information of prospective students and others interested in the University. He tried out for track, but couldn't quite make the Varsity team.

It was in the spring of his senior year when the news of America's entry into the World War hit the campus like a thunderbolt. A mass meeting of all men on the campus was immediately called, and men students met that night in the assembly room of the Education Building — then the principal meeting place on the campus.

There was exciting war talk and much patriotic fervor. Woods was there to cover the meeting for the *Daily* and when he rushed to the print shop, full of excitement, he searched out the shop's biggest and blackest type for a headline. Consternation reigned when a frantic hunt revealed no American flag to be displayed on Page One, but a visit to another print shop down town brought the loan of a flag cut, and the *Daily* next morning carried a scare headline "SPIRIT OF WAR INVADES CAMPUS," with the story properly embellished with a flag.

Many students dropped their classwork and their books and enlisted the next day. Those who did not, enrolled in the student military corps and quickly began serious training. Most of the class stayed to graduate.

Merle Woods recalls that one of his distinctions is that he helped publish the final issue of that notorious publication, the *Mollycoddle*, a scandal sheet issued annually by members of Sigma Delta Chi, journalistic fraternity. This particular issue contained an item that University authorities considered in exceedingly bad taste, and so the authors were called on the carpet before the president of the University. As is customary on such occasions, they solemnly promised that they would publish no more issues of the *Mollycoddle*.

In June, having been recommended some months before by Director H. H. Herbert of the School of Journalism, Woods went directly to a newspaper job at El Reno, on the *El Reno American*. Except for war service and a few months spent on a brief publishing venture at Vinita, he has been in El Reno ever since.

He enlisted in the air service in November of 1917, but was not called to report for duty until the next spring. He then attended ground school at the University of Texas, Austin, Texas; took a special observers' course at the Fort Sill School of Fire and some special training at Post Field. Then he was sent to Selfridge Field, Michigan for advanced aerial gunnery and was there when the Armistice ended the war. After the war he went into the Officers Reserve Corps and had advanced to rank of captain when he resigned from service three years ago because of trouble with his eyes.

In 1921 Woods resigned as editor of the *American* and went to Vinita to establish the *Craig County Gazette* as part owner. However, five months later the two owners of the *American* invited him to come back to El Reno and buy a third interest in that publication, so he returned to El Reno to stay. His associates on the *American* were Edgar Bronson and N. A. Nichols. Bronson died in 1924 and Woods and Nichols became partners.

The *American* has had a very close relationship with the Oklahoma Press Association, which Woods now heads. Bron-

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Life Member Total Is 237

DR. FRED A BARKLEY, '30, '32ms, of Missoula, Montana, is the 237th Life Member of the University of Oklahoma Association.

His Life Membership, received last month, also makes Mrs. Barkley (Elizabeth Anne Ducker, '30, '33ms) a Life Member of the Association.

Both of them majored in botany in the University. He is now curator of the Herbarium and instructor in botany at the Montana State University. Dr. Barkley received his Ph. D. degree from Washington University in 1937.

The new Life Membership pushes the Class of '30 ahead of the Class of '25 in the class standing based on percentage of members of the class who have taken Life Memberships.

Gradually, but steadily, the list of Life Members is increasing. Cost of a Life Membership is \$60. This may be paid, if desired, in \$5 quarterly payments over a period of three years. A single Life Membership makes both husband and wife Life Members of the Association if both are Sooners, although only one magazine subscription is included. Former students are just as eligible as graduates for Life Membership.

All money received on Life Memberships goes into a permanent trust fund, only the interest being available for Association expenses.

How the Classes Rank

CLASS	RANK ON PER CENT BASIS	NUMBER OF MEMBERSHIPS	PER CENT OF CLASS LIFE MEMBERS
'14	1	16	9.64
'13	2	12	9.30
'10	3	7	8.97
'12	4	11	8.94
'15	5	15	7.85
'07	6	3	7.14
'08	7	3	5.66
'11	8	4	4.82
'09	9	2	4.76
'17	10	11	4.18
'20	11	13	3.36
'19	12	8	3.11
'21	13	14	3.04
'16	14	6	2.75
'06	15	1	2.70
'22	16	11	2.14
'18	17	4	1.75
'26	18	8	1.13
'28	19	9	1.06
'23	20	6	1.05
'24	21	7	1.00
'30	22	10	.97
'25	23	7	.94
'33	24	8	0.73
'32	25	7	0.62
'29	26	6	.58
'31	27	6	.55
'37	28	6	0.49
'27	29	3	0.43
'34	30	4	0.37
'35	31	2	0.18
'36	32	1	0.08
'38	33	3	—
Honorary		2	—
Total		237	

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son was secretary of the association for seventeen years, and was elected president of it and also president of the National Editorial Association a short time before his death. Nichols was elected secretary of the state association to succeed him, and in 1929 was elevated to the position of president.

Merle Woods' connection with the Oklahoma Press Association dates way back, as he attended the association's first meeting, held in the spring of 1916 at Tulsa.

Editor Woods is independent in his politics, generally conservative in policies. His service to his community extends much farther than the columns of his newspaper. He has been president of the Kiwanis club, historian of the El Reno post of the American Legion for many years, active member of the Chamber of Commerce, Red Cross and County Health Association, elder and Sunday school superintendent in the Presbyterian Church, and Mrs. Woods directs the church's choir.

A man willing to undertake all of those responsibilities is pretty obviously well

supplied with an unselfish spirit and a willingness to work. Yet this writer never saw him without a cheerful smile of greeting, and a sane, unhurried view of life.

Mr. and Mrs. Woods were married in 1924, and have one daughter, eight years old. And oh, yes. Mr. Woods was born in Parsons, Kansas, if that makes any difference.

He has been active in University of Oklahoma alumni affairs and is now a member of the Alumni Executive Board.



Robert Card, '38bus, has taken a position as salesman for the Ridenour-Baker Mercantile Company of Oklahoma City.

EASTERLING-TIDMORE: Miss Alice Easterling, '38he, and Jess Tidmore, '38, were married March 10.

ORENBAUN-MERKLE: Miss Effie Orenbaun was married to Ralph Merkle, junior engineering student, January 3 in Norman. Mr. Merkle will continue his studies and the couple will reside in Norman.

CLARK-MORTER: Miss Mary Jean Clark, sophomore in the school of home economics, and Jack Morter, senior in the school of geology, were married April 25. She is a member of Kappa Kappa Gamma sorority and he is a member of Acacia fraternity. They have established a home at Los Dones Apartments at Norman and will continue their studies at the University.