

The New Alumni President

SOMEHOW, when they need a man to head the organized alumni of O. U., the executive board generally selects an attorney. Various theories might be advanced to account for this—such as the fact that lawyers take a good deal of interest in public affairs and generally have organizing ability. At any rate, a considerable proportion of the presidents of the University of Oklahoma Association have been lawyers, and when the board met last Commencement Day to select a new president, the choice fell on another lawyer.

He is Hicks Epton, '32law, a native of the State of Arkansas who worked his way through the University and now is a member of the busy law firm, Horsley and Epton, at Wewoka.

His birth occurred at Bingen, Arkansas, which he locates as "three full wagon greasins from Nashville, Arkansas." He was named after three preachers, but has dropped the middle name and declines to testify as to how well he has followed the precepts of any of the three.

Coming to Oklahoma to go to college, he landed at Durant and received the A. B. degree from Southeastern State College in 1927. Mr. Epton's stay at Durant was notable, he recalls, for the fact that all three years he spent at the college there were under the same president.

AFTER teaching for a year in Durant High School, he journeyed on to Norman and the University of Oklahoma which he had in mind as his real destination all along because he wanted to take law. Walking into the office of T. M. Beard, then a member of the Extension Division staff, he said bluntly, "I need a job. I've heard about you and I'd like to work for you."

Something about his personality—his earnestness or the glint of humor in his eyes, or perhaps both—interested Mr. Beard and the young man won a tryout. He made good immediately and worked in the same office all the way through school.

Mr. Epton describes his law school days like this:

"There for three years I watched the diamond stickpin on Dr. Kulp's tie and learned some oil but more gas law; wondered if Dr. Swinford was really going to push his desk off the rostrum, and learned all about legal procedure except how to proceed and get a client; wandered in the labyrinth of Dr. Cheadle's land titles 'til the Noble Red Men danced around my cot at night; heard all the stories of Dr. Wright, some legal and some otherwise, but all to my edification;

was vaccinated with legal bib by Dr. Huggins but doubt if it took; learned about Lawrence vs Fox and the British wagon case from Dean Monnet; learned to love, honor and—at times—obey all of them. All of this, of course, was done in spare time when I wasn't off on some debate trip with Walter Emery, George Copeland, Jim Robinson, or someone else. Josh Lee used to have a slogan, 'Join the Debate Club and See the World.'"

In addition to his active participation in debate and oratory, Mr. Epton served as law school representative on the Men's Council, which had been established only two years previously by adoption of a new student constitution.

The 1932 yearbook carried a sketch in which Mr. Epton was the ostensible hero:

MEN'S COUNCIL MINUTES AND HOURS

MISKOVSKY: If you've got all the proxies, Gillespie, we'll start the meeting.

GILLESPIE: I've got a quorum of them, including Beck, Massad, Bliss, Cook, Barlow, West, Brodersen and I and you, George, make nine.

MISKOVSKY: Minutes.

GILLESPIE: Miskovsky and Gillespie present at last meeting with eight proxies and Clevidence. No business, adjournment.

MISKOVSKY: Fine. Is there any business?

GILLESPIE: Bliss moves, by proxy, that a committee confer with Bennie Owen on any new alibis why the men's council can't get a rake-off on the dances.

MISKOVSKY: Ain't no use. I seen Bill Cross myself and he told me to get the hell out of the Fieldhouse. Got any more proxy motions?

GILLESPIE: West moves by proxy, that we buy keys and Brodersen seconds the motion by proxy. All other proxies favor the motion.

MISKOVSKY: Fine, I guess we'll have keys yet.

EPTON (entering through front window): Oh no, you don't. I have proxies of Clevidence, Bliss, Beck, Massad, and West. We're against it.

GILLESPIE: But West made the motion by proxy.

EPTON: It's a lie. I have his proxy here. And West moves we do not buy keys this year.

MISKOVSKY: Gillespie, I thought you said you had Epton "fixed."

GILLESPIE: I saw him just ten minutes ago and told him there would be no meeting. I can't help it if he won't believe me.

EPTON (assumes a far-away look): Gentlemen and proxy members, the men's council is the governing body of the students. This is the year of the big depression. We have before us one of the largest problems any council ever faced. (Proxies cheer.) This men's council must do something to solve the problems of our students. We must stop and realize that hundreds of students are going without food and clothing to attend the University. Gentlemen, I appeal to you to pass a resolution to circulate a petition calling for an election. We must take the question of the students, to the grass-roots of public opinion. We must know: are the students in favor or opposed to the depression. I move there be an election.

MISKOVSKY and GILLESPIE: Hur-roar. I didn't know you had it in you Hicks. The meeting will be next Tuesday or Wednesday. Let's go get a cup of coffee on the council.



Hicks Epton, Alumni President for 1939-40

But while Mr. Epton was learning about politics and government and public speaking, he was also getting acquainted with a University co-ed, Miss Thelma Pate, of Duncan. He and Miss Pate, who received a B. A. degree in 1932, were married in September, 1933. They now have two children, Billie Lee, three and a half years old, and Mary Elizabeth, five months.

In his student days, Mr. Epton won the Avery and Render oratory medals, represented O. U. three years in oratory and debate, was a member of the 1931 debate team that toured the East, defeating Harvard and other schools, and won the Missouri Valley extemporaneous speaking contest in 1930 at St. Louis. He became a member of Pi Kappa Alpha fraternity.

After receiving his law degree, Mr. Epton went to Wewoka, the "Athens of the oil fields," where he has practiced law ever since.

Mr. Epton has served as director of the Wewoka Chamber of Commerce, as chairman of Red Cross and community relief drives, and has taken an active part in politics of the county and district.

He has kept in close touch with the University and has served the University of Oklahoma Association in various capacities, including membership on the Executive Board. He was chairman of the board's membership committee during the last year, and he and Mrs. Epton are Life Members of the Association.

Discussing his responsibilities as presi-

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