More Traditions

Traditions Change Rapidly In a Young Institution, But Some Are Well Established at O. U.

TRADITIONS, though loosely observed on the University of Oklahoma campus, are recognizable today in numerous and various places. Preceding articles of this series have described traditions in class rivalry, school spirit and intercollegiate sports. Some have a traceable history; others simply "sprang up." With liberal interpretation, however, the word tradition will include them all.

From the earliest day, the University has nurtured the idea of campus beautification until that idea has virtually become tradition. As a result the O. U. campus has been called one of the most attractive in the nation despite its plains setting.

Immediately upon coming to Norman in 1892, the University's first president, Dr. D. R. Boyd, set to work to improve the landscape of the single-building institution. He bought the stock of seedlings of a bankrupt nursery in Kansas and had them set out in the University area. "I could not visualize a treeless university seat," Dr. Boyd said. He continued to insist on tree planting, shrub and flower cultivation, and set the college on the road toward a "campus beautiful by day and night."

One of the trees planted during President Boyd's time was the elm tree standing boldly in front of the "Ad" Building today. Several stories—all different—are told about how the tree was ordered cut down at the time of the erection of the building in 1912, and how it was saved for sentimental reasons—the University's version of "Woodman, Spare that Tree." Almost the only provable *fact* of the matter is that the tree is still standing and today is enhancing the beauty of the building's entrance.

University Boulevard's old boardwalk —though it, too, was an object of some sentiment—did not survive. During its lifetime there was no paving and few sidewalks. The walk started at the site of the McFarlin Church, ran past the president's house, then a frame structure in the middle of the long block on the Boulevard, and turned west near the present Chemistry Building.

Dr. S. Roy Hadsell, '04ba, who was here then, described it like this: "It was high and dry and wide, better than some of the cement walks we have today. Rabbits hid under it! Bull snakes ate the rabbits! Zoologists captured the snakes! Co-eds married the zoologists!"

To call the University Oval itself a tradition might be carrying a liberal definition of the word too far, but that spot has been the scene of development of traditional events. There was a time, of course, when no Oval existed. The single building that was the University during its infancy did not call for one.

When expansion was begun, a choice between quadrangle and oval arrangement presented itself. Professor V. L. Parrington, who joined the faculty in 1898 as professor of English literature, drew an oval plan for the University grounds and presented it to officials. His argument was that the quadrangle plan was old; that the oval would be new and more distinctive. His proposal was adopted.

NOWADAYS mention of the Oval brings to mind the old Spoonholder situated there—a traditional structure if there ever was one. This year it was reinforced to keep it from crumbling to pieces. Constructed as a class memorial by seniors of 1910, it was definitely telling its age by a network of cracks on its surfaces.

Before 1928 when the Memorial Union opened its doors and began to replace the Oval as central gathering place for students, the spoonholder was the hub of campus life—especially night life, so it is said. In fact, that's how the structure acquired its name. It held the spooners.

Today the South Oval has become the traditional lovers' lane area of the campus. Student traditions change, along with the changing geography of the campus.

It would be difficult for recent alumni to imagine the University without "the Corner," but not for long has there been such a large group of clothing stores, grocery stores, drug stores, and other shops at the campus entrance.

Thirty years ago John Barbour's Drug Store downtown was the principal hangout of students. John, '97pharm, and his brother Bob, were a sort of clearing medium for all University or town gossip. Their store was the first place that the returning students went when they landed in Norman in the fall and it was their last stop before leaving in the spring.

Although it was as far from the campus then as it is today (in the same building), it regularly received student patronage. That was before a mile walk was considered a day's work.

About 1911 George Lennox and Morris T. "Wissy" Myers, '11ba, '12ma, opened the Varsity Shop in a small frame building on the same spot where it is today. For a number of years it was the only campus shop. It was *the* center of student loafing, and drew most of the student drug and soft drink trade. Its wooden tables probably bore the initials of every student who attended the University at the time.

In a number of annual seasonal campus events bits of tradition appear. Every spring a statewide interscholastic meet takes place. Students and campus organizations become accustomed, in the thirty-six years since the first one, to having their old friends among high school undergraduates as guests on the campus for a weekend.

Another tradition on the calendar is the spring vacation now allowed at Eastertide. No such second-semester "breathing spell" was granted students before 1908, but not because they didn't want it. As a matter of fact, from about 1900 until the Easter holiday was established, the student simply did not report to class April 1; instead all joined in a picnic and a day of fun, and there was little the administration could do about it.

When the president of the University offered the students a vacation at Easter time, they agreed to cease their annual All Fools' Day walkout. Thus one tradition was brought to an end with the beginning of another.

A small school tradition that began about 1901 and continued for eight years was the annual faculty burlesque show. It was entirely a student affair brought to O. U. from other campuses. A number of collegians put their wits together, then their acting talent, and, according to the reports of old-timers, usually produced a show that left the rest of the student body —and the instructors—howling with laughter. Faculty members were good sports about it. They even co-operated to the extent of lending a dress or hat or frock-tail coat to aid the cause.

Of a little higher caliber in the field of drama was the traditional senior class play given to help defray the expenses of graduation. The first one was held in the spring of '01, a serious presentation

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EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the last of a series of articles about changing traditions at the University of Oklahoma.

of "The Rivals." "School for Scandal" followed in 1902. This tradition, not at all peculiar to O. U., lasted only slightly longer than the burlesque. When the University added drama to the curriculum plays ceased to be presented by a single class.

Stronger than tradition during its approximately sixteen years of life was D. D. M. C. Suggested by a peculiar prank pulled at the University of Nebraska, Deep Dark Mystery Club began simply for the amusement of its members. It developed, however, into a sort of "reform" order, and kept its members and its activities secret. The black mask was the symbol of the club.

The great strength of the organization was due not only to the number in it, but to the fact that virtually all of the prominent men students belonged. Meetings were held at the stroke of twelve, midnight, in a designated grove of trees where their disciplinary deeds were planned.

D. D. M. C. met a violent death in the twenties after considerable unfavorable publicity and litigation.

Discussion of traditions—going from the *sub rosa* to the official—may appropriately close with the story of the University of Oklahoma seal. Necessity for a seal arose, of course, with the organization of the institution. To Dr. Boyd as first president fell the duty of having one prepared.

The idea used was his. He conceived it from a chapel talk he had made on the parable of the sower. G. A. Bucklin, '03ba, first registrar and secretary to President Boyd, drew the design, a sketch of a sower with his bag of seeds. The Latin motto, "Civi et Reipublicae," was furnished by the late Professor Joseph F. Paxton, classical language teacher. Translated, it means "For the Citizens and For the State."

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Mentioned for Judgeship

Royce H. Savage, '25, '27law, young Oklahoma City attorney, might be appointed federal judge of the northern district at Tulsa to succeed Franklin P. Kennamer. This opinion was expressed by newspaper observers last month.

At thirty-six years of age he would be one of the youngest federal judges in the nation.

He served two years as assistant state insurance commissioner, being appointed after his graduation from the University School of Law in '27. He resigned in 1929 to become associated with Eugene O. Monnet, '16, '20law, in general law practice in Tulsa. He moved to Oklahoma City in 1938 to become a member of the law firm of Cantrell, Savage and McCloud.

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