

O. U.'s Athletic Artists

Sooner Alumni in Sculpture
Are a Virile Crew, and Not
Only That—They Manage
To Make a Good Living Too

By EDITH WALKER

FAMOUS artists of ancient Greece liked to make sculptures of athletes, such as the classic figure of the discus thrower. But present-day sculptors trained at the University of Oklahoma go the Greeks one better—they are star athletes themselves!

Far from being the popular conception of an artist—effeminate and pale introverts—these Sooner artists with chisel and mallet are rugged runners, high and broad jumpers, football players, boxers, wrestlers and broncho riders.

And if you hear of an all-state high school football star deciding to attend the University of Oklahoma because of the reputation of the College of Fine Arts, don't laugh it off as an imaginary excuse offered by football recruiters. Athletes *do* go in for fine arts in a great many cases, and they have made an especially amazing record in the field of sculpture.

Joseph R. Taylor, associate professor of art, who knows whereof he speaks, says, "Contrary to the popular notion that artists are sissies, all of the men who have majored in sculpture at O. U. are a rugged lot."

Mr. Taylor founded the Department of Sculpture at O. U. in 1932 and since that time he has turned out sculptors who have won national honors, and has also continued his own work as one of the top-flight sculptors in the country.

The roster of those who have received degrees in sculpture will sound quite familiar to O. U. sports fans. And the list of Joe Taylor's students who did not receive degrees in sculpture, but maintained a keen interest in the work and turned out prize-winning sculpture, also includes a number of athletes.



Above is Mrs. Yolande Jacobson Sheppard, sculpture prize winner, and on the left is Joseph Taylor, sculpturing instructor who likes athletes for students

In all, six B. F. A. in Sculpture degrees have been conferred. The first was presented to redhaired Julius Struppeck in 1936 and the sixth was awarded to Yolande Jacobson Sheppard in June, 1941. All of the sculptors have had work shown in state, regional and national exhibitions. To the layman, it may sound fairly simple to display one's work at a national showing, but the sculptors and other artists have many difficulties to hurdle before their work is accepted for exhibition. The creations are submitted to a jury which considers them on their merits, makes comparisons, and usually rejects them. "Some artists work a lifetime to get their work in an exhibition," Mr. Taylor says.

Since a chapter of Delta Phi Delta, national honorary art fraternity, was established at O. U. five years ago, some Sooner sculptor has won first place every year at the national exhibition of the fraternity at which colleges and universities from all over the country vie for top honors in painting, sculpture, and commercial and industrial art.

IN addition to the pieces of sculpture which have been entered in exhibitions, many figures of people and animals, molded and shaped by O. U.'s athletically inclined artists, still grace the halls and classrooms of the Art Building and appear in other buildings around the campus. Mr. Struppeck is the creator of the stone statues of David Ross Boyd and Stratton D. Brooks, former presidents of the University, which stand at the front entrance of the Administration Building, and the two large figures at the main entrance of the Business Administration Building.

Mr. Struppeck is now in New York

City, executing sculpture for patrons on commissions. Since leaving the University, he has taught at Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, and the University of Montana, Missoula. Mr. Taylor recalls that Struppeck starred in football, track and basketball while in high school, but was unable to go out for athletics at O. U. because he had to work his way through school.

Tom Simms, '37, accepted a scholarship to the Art Students' League in New York City before completing work for a degree at O. U. Mr. Taylor has received word from this former student that he has left the skyline of New York for the broad plains of Texas and is still engaged in sculpture.

"Simms was a track star at O. U., and set a record in the high jump," Mr. Taylor recalls. He also went out for broad jumping, middle distance running and relay.

Bart Ward, '37fa, '38sculpture, '39m.fa, has the reputation of being one of the greatest of O. U. track stars. The record he set for the 440-yard dash is still unbroken. During his undergraduate days, he supported himself by working for the athletic department and doing commercial art work. Mr. Ward won 68 medals and 8 ribbons in athletics. Recently he was appointed gallery director at the Oklahoma City Art Center, and assistant supervisor of the statewide WPA Art Project.

Harold Castor, '39sculpture, an Oklahoma artist known for his work as a portrait sculptor, also is associated with the Art Center. He has just finished several commissions in Ponca City in which he employed native clay.

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"Castor is considered one of the best high school basketball centers ever developed in Oklahoma City," Joe Taylor says. Castor too, had to work his way through school and could not go out for athletics at the University. He and Delia Franklin, '36fa, were married while both were students, and supported themselves by selling their art work.

Derald Thomas Swineford, '31fa, known as one of the best sculptors in the Southwest, is head of the sculpture department at West Texas State Teachers College, Canyon, Texas. In addition to his ability as an artist, he was a football fullback at Enid High School and at O. U. took part in boxing and wrestling. Mr. Taylor recalls that Swineford, usually mild mannered in appearance, once cleaned up on some five or six of his friends when they became unduly rough and rambunctious during a friendly brawl.

Like a pioneer who marks the trail behind him, Mr. Swineford has left a great many pieces of sculpture on the campus and elsewhere in the state. His work includes the decorative relief sculpture carved in wood at the Chickasha courthouse and the WKY broadcasting studios in Oklahoma City. His murals appear in many public buildings in the state.

Oliver Gough Meeks, '38fa, '41m.fa, majored in painting at O. U., but devoted a portion of his time to learning the methods and media of sculpture, centering upon it for his minor subject. A recent promotion has placed Mr. Meeks back on the University campus where he will handle art and photography in connection with the department of archaeology. Last January he was appointed assistant supervisor of the statewide WPA Art Project. Bart Ward succeeds him in that position.

Vera Ione Oxenford, '37sculpture, did notable work in sculpture while an O. U. student, Mr. Taylor says. Now Mrs. Williams, she is a homemaker in California.

Romance touched the department of sculpture this year with the marriage of Craig Sheppard, '38fa, '39sculpture, former O. U. art teacher, and Yolande Jacobson, '41sculpture, daughter of Oscar B. Jacobson, director of the School of Art. The couple live in Bozeman, Montana, where Mr. Sheppard teaches art in Montana State College.

They also help to uphold Joe Taylor's statement that O. U.'s sculptors are athletes, not sissies. Mrs. Sheppard probably has never seriously considered playing football, but she was an outstanding dancer at the University and a member of Orchesis, organization of co-eds skilled in esthetic dancing. Mr. Sheppard is the rugged, out-door type which prefers a pipe, tweeds and cocker spaniels above all else. His specialty is riding bucking

bronchos and Brahma steers. Some of his most spectacular bronc riding was done several years ago in a rodeo at Madison Square Garden in New York City.

Although they have been married less than six months, the Sheppards have a good start in the sculpture world. Mr. Sheppard has placed first and second for pieces of sculpture entered in the National Delta Phi Delta exhibition, and his work has also been shown in Kansas City, Missouri; Dallas, Texas, and Oklahoma City.

Combining painting and sculpture to produce carved murals on linoleum has brought the young artist nationwide publicity. He has done this unique type of mural in the Norman Courts and in the office of Jesse Jones, Secretary of Commerce at Washington, D. C. The most widely known work which Sheppard left on the campus is the series of murals in the entrance foyer of the Business Administration Building. Recently he completed the first panel of a series for the Union Building at Montana State College.

His wife, the tall, lovely Yolande, a sculptor herself, qualifies as a suitable model for a sculptor. She won the 1941 Letzeiser Medal in Art given annually at O. U. to an outstanding senior in the School of Art, and has placed second in the annual Midwestern Exhibition at Kansas City. "Which really *is* something," Joe Taylor says. The most recent feat of the Sheppards was made known shortly after their marriage with the notification that Mr. Sheppard had won first and his bride had won second in the annual sculpture exhibition at the Denver, Colorado, Art Museum.

Full credit for stimulating his art students to develop their talents fully should be given Joe Taylor, friendly teacher and companion. His own record as a sculptor and painter has set an example. As for athletics, he has played football and likes to box, hunt and fish.

Mr. Taylor has a B. F. A. degree in painting and sculpture and an M. F. A. degree in sculpture from the University of Washington, Seattle. He has studied at Columbia University under Maldarelli, one of the leading New York sculptors, and in London, England. His models of people and animals, as well as his paintings of all types, have been exhibited at innumerable showings and most of them have been returned to his office in the Art Building accompanied by an award, prize or some kind of recognition.

Mr. Taylor uses a teaching method which he believes will awaken and develop the artistic talents of students. He has a theory that students take more interest in their work and learn faster if allowed to perform many projects, instead of spending too much time on a few projects.

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"This gives them more volume of experience within the limited time they have for study," the sculpture professor says. His classes are informal. He believes discipline will take care of itself if students become interested in their work.

Only one or two degrees in sculpture are granted each year. There are several reasons for the small number, and one of them is Joe Taylor. Most people aren't born with the desire to spend hours working with shapeless masses of stone, clay and wood. Knowing this, Mr. Taylor doesn't attempt to recruit students.

"I don't encourage students to major in sculpture unless they show unusual aptitude. Art is a heartbreaking profession for any but the best."

Because Mr. Taylor takes only the good students, he can say with pride and veracity, "Of those who have graduated with a major in sculpture, not one has failed to attract attention for the excellence of his work."

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Watch 640 on Your Radio Dial

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three things: power, which has remained the same for WNAD at 1,000 watts; antenna height; and the propagation factor, which is a function of the frequency. Thus with a frequency of 640 kilocycles the propagation factor is greatly decreased, which means that the strength of the waves the transmitter sends out is not reduced as rapidly as that of waves of higher frequencies. Consequently waves of the lower frequencies travel farther.

The general public, of course, is chiefly interested in the programs that a station produces, instead of the technical processes involved. Homer Heck, director of station WNAD, and H. H. Leake, production manager, are constantly improving the service that the station is now equipped to render to undergraduates, alumni, patrons and friends of the University, and listeners in general.

While there are several new programs on the regular broadcast schedule this fall, emphasis is on expansion and better production of established programs which have been well received by listeners in the past. At intervals throughout the day the station will continue to broadcast music of the masters from high fidelity recordings. The work of planning and directing the musical programs, as well as providing appropriate background music for other types of programs, is being placed in the hands of a special music supervisor this year, since the station puts so much emphasis on this type of program.

Plans to build up the station's record library are going forward through collaboration with the Union and the School of Music, and Mr. Leake this year hopes to be able to begin advance publication

of programs with notes and comments to aid listeners in the enjoyment and understanding of the world's fine music.

Other programs of general interest, such as the Spanish lessons conducted by Dr. Stephen Scatori, lectures on public problems, and broadcasts originating in University classrooms, are being continued on the regular schedule.

Broadcasts directed to special groups will be heard in increased number. In addition to the familiar "Indians for Indians Hour" conducted by Don Whistler, tribal chief of the Sac and Fox, and the broadcasts to state garden clubs, Mr. Heck and Mr. Leake are contemplating programs for Negro groups and for labor groups.

The Alumni Association will sponsor a variety program for alumni from 5 to 5:30 p. m. each Wednesday.

Undoubtedly the most popular of new broadcasts this fall will be the coverage of all Sooner football games. WNAD has been selected to originate the play-by-play description of both home and foreign games. The broadcasts are available to commercial stations at a nominal charge.

Improved and expanded facilities of WNAD provide greater opportunities for University students studying any phase of radio. Advance to full daytime operation last spring opened new positions on the engineering staff in which young men are now preparing for careers in operation of commercial radio stations. Greater time on the air also called for more announcers, continuity writers, artists and directors. Work on the University station in these fields provides experience that will make the students valuable to commercial radio when they finish school.

This year the "Radio Workshop," accredited in the schools of speech, drama and journalism, has been expanded to include work in radio music.

Now completely and modernly equipped, "The Voice of Soonerland" is carrying forward a program to the entire state.

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Paintings On Tour

Paintings by O. U. artists are among those which have been assembled by the Washington office of the WPA art program for national tours which will last for at least two years.

One exhibition is made up of oil paintings, while the other is limited to the works of Indian artists. Those who have pictures in the first group are Oliver Meeks, '38fa, Oklahoma City; Dorothea Stevenson, '31fa, Oklahoma City; Leonard Good, '27fa, Norman; and Jo Lee Rodke, '40ed, Shawnee.

Artists whose pictures will be included in the other exhibition are Franklin Gritts, '39, Lawrence, Kansas, and Richard West, '41fa, Bacone.

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