

Sooner Veteran Is Surprised To Find Name on War Memorial

Imagine yourself a war veteran returning to college and finding your name listed as missing in action on a memorial plaque there. That is what happened to James W. Rodgers, Jr., '39, Holdenville, when he came back to the University last January to put the finishing touches on a B. A. in government and a law degree.

It all happened while Rodgers was looking over the World War II memorial plaque in the Union to see the name of his uncle, First Lt. John E. Powell, '36-'40, also of Holdenville, who is listed as killed in action. Lieutenant Powell was a B-17 pilot.

By coincidence, Rodgers met an airman in a German prison camp who had known Powell while he was stationed in the Pacific theater. It was through this man that Rodgers first learned the fate of his uncle, who had been his roommate from 1936-38 at O.U.

But Rodgers' own story dates to that unforgettable day—his last mission—on which five members of the crew were killed, and he received a broken leg from a shell fragment and had to struggle to reach the escape hatch of the tail-spinning B-24 Liberator of which he was a radioman and gunner.

Flying in formation with 39 other B-24s, his plane was on its ninth mission from its Italian base to the Messerschmitt factory at Wiener Neustadt, Austria, about 30 minutes from its target—scheduled to be bombed at 11 a.m.—when the formation was attacked by about 125 fighters from the "Abbeville Kids" or Herman Goering's "Yellow Nose" outfit. Goering's veterans were known by both names.

Flying in the lower left part of the formation, Rodgers saw the No. one and four planes knocked out and his ship, No. seven fell back when enemy fire crippled the bomber. One of the four motors had gone out five minutes before the assault on the formation.

A burst from a German 20 millimeter shell tore the nose from the bomber, killing the co-pilot, navigator, bombardier and nose gunner and shortly thereafter 10 to 14 enemy planes converged on the crippled plane from the rear.

The few seconds from the time the ship went into a dive until he jumped moved slowly for Rodgers. Pressure from the dive pinned him to the floor, preventing him from crawling to the escape hatch.

But an atmospheric upheaval did the trick: the air pocket lifted the plane raising Rodgers from the floor and permitting him to reach the opening where he caught his broken right leg in a cable just before the slipstream pulled him from the hatch.

"I thought for awhile I was going to leave my leg in the plane, but I knew I had to jump and soon," the former sergeant recalled. Fortunately he freed his leg from the cable and soon was floating to earth amid a stillness startling by contrast to the battle going on overhead.

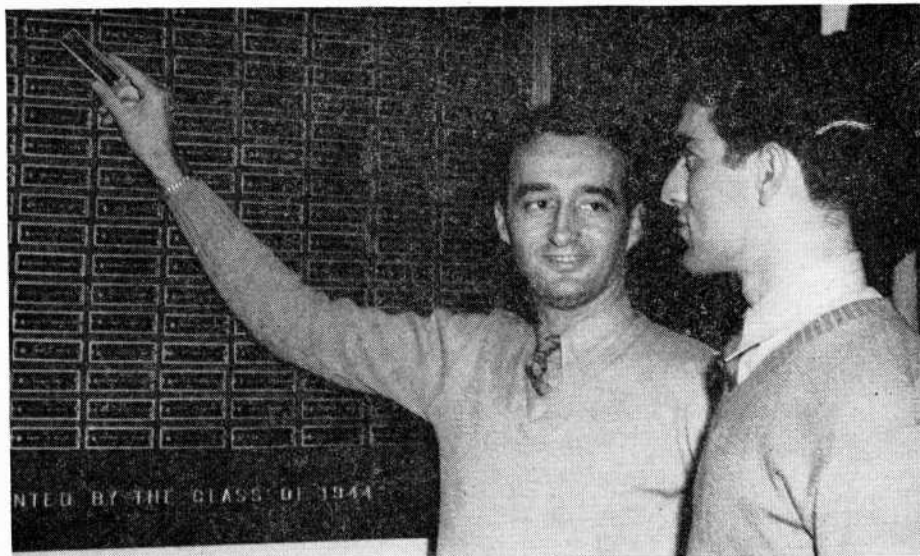
Captured 30 minutes after he landed—he had dropped in a pine tree and was hardly jarred—Rodgers was carried down a mountainside in the Austrian Alps by six or seven Austrian youths, who patted his back and smiled at him when his two German captors were not looking.

At that time, the area around St. Polten, Austria, had not been bombed by the allies and the natives were friendly. Later, while hospitalized at Stalag 17-B near Krems west of Vienna on the Danube, the former airman saw the beginning of heavy bombing of the area by Yank and RAF bombers, and friendliness of the people grew to hatred.

Daylight and night bombings stepped up to a schedule of four or five days a week when Rodgers and an A.A.F. lieutenant were sent from the hospital to St. Polten, under guard.

Halted near the outskirts of St. Polten by a Yank raid, the prisoners and guards took shelter with residents of the city and here the Americans saw their first hatred of the Yanks exhibited.

Women and children screamed and cried as bombs aimed at a nearby airfield came close. Smiles that greeted the Americans when they entered



Veteran James W. Rodgers, Jr., '39, law student, uses the nameplate bearing his name as a pointer to show SOONER MAGAZINE editor, George Souris, where he found it on the World War II Memorial plaque in the Union last January. Rodgers, who had been listed missing in action, was looking for the name of his uncle, First Lt. John E. Powell, '36-'40, his pre-war roommate at O.U., who is listed as killed in action on the plaque.

the shelter turned to looks of revulsion and hate. Threats were muttered; "It was nice to know the two guards were standing by," Rodgers said.

He was next sent from St. Polten to the interrogation camp at Frankfurt, where he was questioned, then told by Luftwaffe intelligence officers that they held a complete file on him: when he entered the service, where he trained, when he shipped overseas and where his unit, the 15th A.A.F. had served and bombed.

In one instance, another prisoner was told about his friendship with a boy in Florida and incidents of his personal life before he entered the service.

From Frankfurt, Rodgers was sent to Kiefheide in Pomerania, where he stayed with 10,000 other allied airmen, largely American, from July, 1944, until February, 1945, when they were moved to Barth as the Russians moved west.

Enroute to Barth by box car—it took eight days to cover the 90 miles—German guards discovered only 52 Americans in the car, which originally contained 53 prisoners.

Rodgers and his mates were threatened with death if 53 men were not in the car when it reached Barth and the 53rd man could not be found. At Barth it was discovered the man who counted the prisoner list erred, only 52 men were in the car originally.

Facilities at Barth were the best of any camp in which Rodgers was confined. Even showers were available. But the food pinch was on and Red Cross packages, parcels that saved many lives, were not issued for seven weeks.

While a prisoner, Rodgers dropped in weight from 145 pounds to 115, but has regained the loss since he returned to American hands on May 13, 1945.

Rodgers is one war hero who was classified as 4-F for two years before being inducted into the armed forces. He was disqualified from military duty for rheumatic heart in February, 1941, but in January, 1943, Uncle Sam considered him fit enough for service and crooked a beckoning finger at Rodgers.

He received four months of basic training at Shepard Field, Texas, before being sent to Harlingen Army Gunnery School, Texas. His next station was at Sioux Falls Radio School, South Dakota, followed by four months of phase training and overseas indoctrination at Peterson Field, Colorado Springs. In April, 1944, Rodgers was transferred to Manduria, Italy, which is located "in the heel of the boot."

The next month, on May 24, Rodgers flew his last mission.

At the University, Rodgers was a member of

the Men's Glee Club from 1936-39. This fall he is pledging Sigma Phi Epsilon, a newly activated social fraternity on the campus. Still "mad about music," Rodgers is director of the Sig Ep choral group; he also is secretary of the pledge class.

Rodgers has definite ideas on maintaining peace; the following excerpts giving his views on the subject were taken from the July 12, 1945, issue of the Holdenville Daily News:

"The war of tomorrow will come to our own back yard," if we fail to secure and maintain the peace American boys and allied forces have given their lives to defend.

The opinion is that of former T/Sgt. James W. Rodgers, Jr., Liberator bomber crewman who was shot down over Austria May 24, 1944, and remained a prisoner of the Germans until May 1, 1945, where he was freed by Red army troops.

Maintenance of the peace, Rodgers is convinced, hinges on two factors: a constant state of preparedness by the United States and full co-operation with Russia.

Utter desolation of German cities by allied air power and artillery fire, with its accompanying shattering of civilian morale is not a comforting sight.

"If the American people could have seen Germany before the capitulation, they would realize the horrors of war and forever try to avoid a similar experience in this country.

"America had better prepare today for its peace tomorrow," Rodgers declared. "We must not be the victim tomorrow as we were in 1941, nor must we be swayed by propaganda that would send us into conflict."

Rodgers' respect for the Russian soldier is of the highest. As a people, they have a great respect for Americans and, granting that Russia will dominate the Euroasian continent for years to come. He is convinced Soviet and American paths to peace are parallel.

The former airman's regard for forces of the Soviet blossomed the night of May 1, 1945, when Red troops entered Barth, Germany, freeing prisoners at Stalag Luft 1 and joining captured allied fliers in a celebration that lasted all night.

"We were listening to the radio about 10 p.m. that night. The program was the Hit Parade broadcast by the BBC and we had just heard a bulletin that Hitler was dead, when we got the news the Russians were there," Rodgers recounted.

"The first Russians I saw were two men in a patrol car. Later, the next day, they entered in force. Boys from the camp started a snake dance and the place was in an uproar."

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Glamour of Public Relations

In a recent issue of *Tide* magazine, a summary reprint article of a dissertation by Joseph W. Hicks, public relations counsel of Chicago, as it appeared in the *Public Relations Journal* was distributed throughout the country. Joe Hicks, graduate of the University of Oklahoma in 1923, is one of the nation's leading public relations counsels and we can readily take it from this man of experience, "Public relations—it isn't a road to power." The reprint is as follows:

"The business and/or profession of public relations, which has lately been dressed down by Sunday critics in and outside the field and with and without its best interests at heart, is in for another going over this month, this time from a sympathetic but worried insider. The April issue of the *Public Relations Journal* of the American Council on Public Relations will carry a piece titled 'Public Relations—Glamour Girl of the Professions,' authored by Joseph W. Hicks, veterans Chicago public relations counsellor.

"Among other things, the Hicks critique declares there is danger that 'too many pseudo-practitioners or meal-ticket forces will turn the glamour girl into a common prostitute' and proposes that public relations practitioners be licensed on the basis of educational qualifications and state examinations, like lawyers, certified public accountants and insurance underwriters.

"Hicks' story declares the trouble is, 'Too many people think public relations is exciting and new and want to take a whirl at it. It has taken the place in the career spotlight which the newspaper profession occupied 20 years ago . . . resulting in a mushroom growth of too many so-called public relations firms and too many new and inexperienced persons peddling wares to people who don't know what they're buying.'

"Another symptom of unhealthy instability which has Hicks worried is the fact that even public relations men who are adequately qualified and who

maintain their own high standards of professional conduct 'will never receive public recognition as true professionals as long as there are half a dozen or more associations clamoring for recognition and offering diverse if not actually contradictory codes of ethics—and trying to organize or regiment the profession with questionable standards or none at all.' He concludes that 'one or two well-organized associations are needed to help the glamour girl grow into a capable and respectable business woman.'

"What the business needs, Hicks says, is better public relations for itself, development of educational opportunities, and a contrite recognition that its great potential influence and opportunities for power require that 'public relations be regarded as a profession with standards of ethics held high enough to obviate any public distrust.' If that seems like a large order Hicks' article declares it is no bigger a job than being a public relations counsellor and that 'we who are paid to help solve other people's public relations problems should not find our own too difficult. But we must guard against giving the public the impression ours is a glamorous profession in a cheap sense, or that it is a road to power. We must sell it, instead, for what it is, a service to both client and public that they may better understand one another. And we must sell the public relations counsellor as the responsible professional he is, emphasizing his place and function as a specialist in our complex modern world.'

"Naturally Hicks' full text (written at the invitation of Rex F. Harlow, president of the American Council on Public Relations) qualifies some of the harsh judgments and blunt phrases but it was written with both barrels in hope that frank talk inside the profession can do a needed job; and before outsiders, who are either unsympathetic to or unaware of internal professional problems, set up a hue and cry that would seriously threaten the basic positions and effectiveness of the entire business. Interestingly enough, Hicks was reported one of the first men in the profession to define it broadly and thoughtfully, but neatly enough to bear repetition. Several years ago, addressing a conference on wartime public relations sponsored by the Illinois Manufacturers' Association in Chicago, he said, 'My definition for that kicked-about and nebulous term public relations is "any effort designed to build, improve or maintain the stature and dignity of an industry, organization, product, service or individual".' His current article elaborates on the side of social significance, stating 'public relations is a true child of democracy, for it not only assumes that the public's opinion is important, but admits the necessity of educating the public so that its opinion will be based on knowledge and understanding.'

"Hicks claims some 20 years experience in the profession which he currently criticizes 'for its own good.' He started the Jos. W. Hicks organiza-

tion in Chicago in 1942 after a year free-lancing for the National Margarine Institute and the National Conference Association. Prior to that he had been director of publicity, advertising and public relations for the H. M. Bylesby-Standard Gas and Electric Utility group. Before that he worked for newspapers, including the *Los Angeles Times*, the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* and the *Oklahoma City Times*. Currently Hicks' organization comprises a staff of 22 in Chicago and three in the Omaha branch office. It has handled a variety of accounts ranging from utilities and the National Small Businessmen's Association to the Boys' Brotherhood Republic and including Curtiss Candy Company, Sunkist Pie Company and radio singer Curt Massey.

"One of the outfit's most interesting jobs, involving several dimensions of public relations, was the *Washington Reports on Rationing* radio program sponsored by the council on candy of the National Confectioners' Association for a year beginning February, 1943, and handled in co-operation with BBD&O, Chicago. Its basic purpose was to acquaint government leaders with the candy industry's claims to essentiality on the basis of nutritional value. But it was adroitly set up as a sounding board for official opinion and war effort messages and featured prominent public figures, including Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt, as guest speakers. As late as last fall when Westbrook Pegler was writing his serial exposé of alleged exploitation of official position by the late president's wife, Hicks was described in pure Pegler sarcasm as 'a public relations genius' for thinking up a promotions device which ingratiated officialdom by giving away some of the candy council's air time.

"Recently in line of duty Hicks again received a plug in the public print when he was mentioned by Walter Winchell as possible intermediary in the case of the disappearance of Suzanne Froedert, malt fortune heiress who was feared kidnapped. Hicks acted in the matter on behalf of the girl's father and his longtime client, head of Froedert Grain and Malting, Inc., but he was no part of domestic relations counselling. Last week, while correcting galleys on his critique of the profession, he missed that, verily, wide-spread publicity is not necessarily good public relations."

Recreation Tips to Be Told

Tips on just how to make that party or club program go over with a bang will be discussed at a recreation institute December 2 to 6 on the University campus.

Mrs. Anne Livingstone, social recreation specialist of the National Recreation Association, will conduct the meeting, which is sponsored by the Extension Division and the women's physical education department.

Topics to be discussed during the institute include such practical problems as party techniques and social recreation problems, recreation objectives, party planning, program planning, developing leadership and new recreation leadership. The meetings will be arranged so that both discussion and activity will be included.

O.U. Medics Marry Young

What was that old idea of struggling young doctors waiting till they've hung out their shingles before being married?

Not so, say 124 of the 260 men enrolled in the University Medical School. Although there have always been a few married students enrolled, this year's crop has set a new record, Dr. Jacques P. Gray, dean of the school, says.

Fifty-one of the 72 men in the freshman class are married. The sophomore class has 15 "husbands", juniors, 26, and senior, 32.

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IFC Names Officers, Committees

Eight committees were appointed and two officers elected at the first fall meeting of I.F.C. held at the Kappa Alpha House on the O.U. campus.

Jerry Keen, Kappa Alpha, was elected secretary and Roy Tomlinson, Delta Upsilon, was elected treasurer by the Inter Fraternity Council.

Bill Matthews, I.F.C. president, appointed the following members as chairmen of the fall committees: Bob Brammer, Delta Upsilon, scholarship; Roy Tomlinson, finance; Bill Cochran, Sigma Nu, social; Louis Gresham, Sigma Xi, rush and pledging; Quinton Peters, Sigma Phi Epsilon, publicity; Dick Trent, Sigma Alpha Epsilon, and Joe Johnson, Beta Theta Pi, by-law revision.

An eighth committee, the general welfare committee, was named with the chairmen of all other committees as members.

To eliminate confusion and improper bidding, Matthews requested that a list of all members and pledges be submitted to the I.F.C. office designating which men were married. This measure was forwarded to prevent future extension of a single bid to men who are married.

It was decided that minutes of each I.F.C. meeting would be mimeographed and sent to each house to familiarize fraternity members with the proceedings of interfraternity affairs.

A motion was passed that pledges enrolled in zero courses in the University be granted hour-credit for those courses for the purpose of initiation.

The council passed unanimously to co-operate fully with the new Sooner Booster Board on proposals submitted recently by the new pep organization.

Roll Call—

became the bride of Bill M. Sager, Rogers, Arkansas, in June in the McFarlin Memorial Methodist Church, Norman.

FREY-WITHERSPOON: Donna Jean Frey, Oklahoma City, became the bride of James Leiland Witherspoon, '46, Oklahoma City, June 8 in the Crown Heights Methodist Church. Mr. Witherspoon planned to re-enter the University in autumn. The couple are making their home in Oklahoma City.

HINSON-WYLIE: Juanita Hinson, '44-'46, Prague, became the bride of Donald B. Wylie, Seattle, Washington, September 11 in the home of the bride's parents. Mrs. Wylie was a member of Alpha Chi Omega Sorority, Thalian, honorary speech club, and the campus League of Women Voters at the University. Mr. Wylie attended the University of Washington, Seattle, where he was a member of Phi Gamma Delta Fraternity. He served three years in the naval reserve. The couple has established a home in Seattle where they are continuing their university work.

DOUGHTY-MARTIN: Mavis Christine Dougherty, '43-'46, Talihina, and Robert G. Martin, Jr., '42-'46, Enid, were married September 4 in Talihina. Mrs. Martin is a member of Alpha Xi Delta Sorority, Kappa Phi, Methodist girls society, and Theta Sigma Phi, honorary professional fraternity for women in journalism. Mr. Martin graduated from Phillips University, Enid. He served three years in the Army and is now a graduate student at the University School of Journalism where he is a member of Sigma Delta Chi, professional fraternity for men in journalism. The couple is at home in Norman where both are attending the University.



Members of the I.F.C., governing body of the fraternities on the O.U. campus, include (seated, L. to R.) Jerry Keen, K.A., I.F.C. secretary; Bill Matthews, S.A.E., secretary of fraternity affairs, and Committee Chairmen Roy Tomlinson, D.U.; Dick Trent, S.A.E.; (second row, L. to R.) Bob Brammer, D.U.; Louis Gresham, Sigma Chi; Quinton Peters, Sigma Phi Epsilon; Bill Cochran, Sigma Nu, and Joe Johnson, Beta.

Sooner Veteran—

The Hit Parade was still coming over the airwaves when the former sergeant and his mates returned to their barracks and, appropriately enough, the No. 1 tune that night was "Don't Fence Me In."

Col. Hubert Zemke and Lt. Col. Francis Gableski. American air aces contacted authorities and American fliers were flown from Barth to France in B-17s. Rodgers and his group landed at Rheims, May 14, ten days short of a year from the time he was shot down.

Irrespective of the future, however, the former sergeant, son of Mr. and Mrs. James W. Rodgers, Sr., Holdenville, is going to join with forces who will demand that the United States be ready to defend itself at all times.

"To have peace," he maintains, "other nations must know we are ready for war and powerful enough to defend ourselves."

Scholarships to O.U. Offered

Four scholarships for \$200 per semester are being offered by the Will Rogers board of control for the training at the University of specialists and teachers in the field of the physically handicapped and behavior deviates. Applicants who receive the awards must agree to make their services available to the handicapped children in Oklahoma for at least one year after completion of training.

Hal Muldrow, Jr.

'28

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