

SOONER MAGAZINE

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The Cover

Here's the long and short of sports at O.U. Johnny Allsup, 5-5½, speedy halfback on the Sooner football team looks up into the face of 6-10½ Marcus Freiberger, freshman basketeer. For Marcus this year is the beginning of collegiate sports, but this was Johnny's last season. He is a business senior. Marcus is following in the footsteps of two brothers who were basketball greats in the Southwest Conference.

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Riding the Sooner Range

BY TED BEARD

Back in the files, holding hundreds of thousands of items, biographical sketches, etc. on 75,000-plus alumni of the University of Oklahoma scattered to the four corners of the world, G. B. "DEKE" PARKER, '08 ba, is number 17,404!! BUT—in His Riding of the Sooner Range, Deke Parker is indeed far more than a number or group of numbers in the fine contributions he has made over the years for his alma mater.

It is an interesting file—this Deke Parker file—with its exchange of correspondence between BEP HUTTO, '10ba, during his year as president of the Alumni Association back in 1920; DICK CLOYD, '19ba, '28law, who was general alumni secretary back in 1919; FRANK CLECKLER, '21ba, who was the managing general of the Association in the late twenties and early thirties, and yes, even stacks of correspondence between your Range Rider and Deke Parker in the past fifteen years.

Sure, even ten years ago (December, 1937) *Who's Who in America* said of Deke Parker: "Parker, George B., newspaper editor; b. Ithaca, Mich., Sept. 10, 1886; s. Dean S. and Harriet (Johnson) P.; grad. high sch., Ithaca, 1904; A. B., U. of Okla., 1902; m. Adelaide Loomis, or Norman, Okla., June 12, 1912; children—George B., Mary. Successively reporter, city editor, mgn. editor and editor *Oklahoma News*, 1909-20; editor Cleveland (O.) *Press*, 1920-22; editor in chief of Southwestern group of Scripps-Howard newspapers 1924-27, editor in chief since 1927 (newspapers in 24 cities of U.S.). Mem. Kappa Alpha, Phi Beta Kappa, Sigma Delta Chi. *Clubs:* Lotos, Kappa Alpha (Southern), Duth Treat (New York); National Press (Washington, D.C.); Mid-Day (Cleveland). *Home:* 1840 24th St., N. W. *Office:* 1013 18th St., N.W., Washington, D.C."

Then we come around to a post World War II, when a fine young quartet did a lot of riding of the Sooner Range up Washington way, representing Sigma Delta Chi at their national conclave, closing on November 15, 1947. The quartet? All seniors in the School of Journalism! They are as follows: JOE L. FLEMING, Langley, O. U. chapter president; LARRY STEPHENSON, Headrick, chapter secretary; CHARLES L. WARD, Heber Springs, Arkansas, and DICK KING, Stephenville, Texas.

It happens that the Washington alums, had another of their big winter dinner sessions in Washington while the boys were there. The speaker? None other than Deke himself. It was such a fine "look back in retrospect" on the part of Deke Parker that we take you on the Range in this December, 1947, article by giving you Deke Parker's "speech" in full, as he delivered it to the



G. B. "DEKE" PARKER, '08BA
Reminisces.

Sooner assembly in Washington just a few nights ago. Here 'tize:

"In this capital of a worried world there is a strong impulse in anyone who is asked to make a speech to discuss the cosmos—to deal with Iraq and Iran and Korea, Kamachatka and Siam, Egypt and Palestine, Stalin, Molotov, Attlee and De Gaulle, the Marshall Plan and the cost thereof, and other matters global.

"I am sure you will be pleased to forgive me if I skip those uttermost parts of our not too good earth and confine myself to just one domestic and always interesting section of it—Oklahoma, with especial emphasis on Oklahoma University.

"What I have to say will be mostly on the reminiscent side, since the years invite that, and since I have not grown any younger from 1908, when I graduated, to the rapidly approaching 1948. Your formative time is your youth. What happens then is always more vivid and therefore more interesting, to you, at least, than what happens in the last score of the allotted three and ten.

"Furthermore, I am interested in perpetuating full appreciation of the founder of the University we love so well. And it chances that both Mrs. Parker and I were in, fairly near the beginning. She was a resident of Norman when I arrived, and I drew her and she drew me when I came to reg-

ister. She was working at the registrar's counter, and it was she who asked me all those quite personal questions about where born, and when—and you might even say, why—your church affiliation, your father's occupation, and all the other routine and bothersome queries which always seem to the authorities pertinent to a prospective college education. I found myself much more attracted to her than to the document she was preparing for me to sign. If there ever is such a thing as love at first sight, that was that, for me—then. But as for her, I was just another customer. So it took several years of hard effort on my part to work it out. I finally hit the jackpot.

"David R. Boyd was president—the first president—and founder.

"In those days there were more buffalo wallows than sidewalks in and around Norman. The setting chosen for the University was a wind-swept and dust-swept and sun-drenched stretch of prairie. Poor, little thirsty sprouts were the stately elms you see today. And it might still be wind-swept and dust-bowlish if it had not been for David R. Boyd. In a very broad sense Dr. Boyd made the University the beautiful place it is now. He made it pretty much with his own bare hands, coupled with his vision of what could be done by a concept that any ugly thing can be made a thing of beauty and a joy forever, if you work at it hard enough. Dr. Boyd was inspired from that first barren start, on through all his days of service in Norman with a craving for turning something drab into something lovely. It is a craving that inspires every great pioneer.

"Being a very practical person he didn't just dream. He made a cut-rate bargain with a Kansas City nursery for thousands of little sticks which when planted grew and grew and grew and today shelter and shade and soothe us when we go back to our reunions, and will always make charming the memories we have taken with us.

"As he altered and beautified the landscape so did Dr. Boyd dominate the building of the University in all its branches. In those days he was the University and the University was Dr. Boyd. He died a few years ago. Whatever his place may be in the immortality his great, white and stern Presbyterian soul now occupies, Dr. Boyd already before his death had achieved immortality so far as Oklahoma University was, and is, concerned.

"As long as an elm stands, as long as one stone tops another, Dr. Boyd is there. He never will be forgotten.

"And whether it be with constitutions or educational institutions, or individuals, we should never fail to honor the fathers. I am glad therefore tonight to have the privilege of paying tribute to the memory of David R. Boyd.

"One other of the pioneers I want to mention particularly is Vernon Louis Parrington. He means more to me than any other man in my life except my father. One of the greatest teachers and historians of our time, he became head of the English department of Washington State University and author of *Main Currents of American Thought*, Pulitzer prize winner for history in 1927 and now a classical must for reference in every school and public library in our land. Parrington Hall on the Washington University campus stands as a monument to him. He was fired from Oklahoma University for smoking cigarettes. Quite a thrilling story in itself. But I won't go too deeply into that, except to say that it involved a lot of politics and patronage on the part of the first administration of Oklahoma as a State—statehood having come in 1907. Charles N. Haskell was governor and though never noted for ecclesiastical leanings personally, he knew how to organize. Norman in those days was practically the capital of the Bible Belt. So he organized the Fundamentalists. A big scandal was generated. Card-playing, dancing and cigarette smoking were then definitely sins against the Holy Ghost, even though the Kappa Alphas by that time had landed. So a big hearing was held and Parrington was given the heave-ho. Along with him in protest went faculty members who, like Parrington, had gone west, young men, including Wilbur Ray Humphreys, later to become dean of the School

of Fine Arts of the University of Michigan, and graduates from Johns Hopkins, Harvard, Columbia and Michigan. Although stern and rock-bound was the coast of David R. Boyd, that was his last year. He went out in what Professor Parrington himself described in his only comment on the affair as a political cyclone. Mixed into the story were Theodore Roosevelt, Dr. Lyman Abbott, and other national names, lined up, anti-Haskell, and on the side of academic freedom.

"The most dramatic feature of the plot was a letter published by Dr. Abbott in his *Outlook*—a letter from the theocratic front penned by a preacher named Morgan to a Reverend Linebaugh who seemed to be the spearhead of the Southern Baptist, Southern Methodist, Democratic axis. Dr. Abbott considerably left blank the names but as an example of the way tempora and mores were running at the moment I will read from the good pastor's epistle:

April 25, 1908.
Norman, Oklahoma

Dear Brother:

The following are the names of the University professors who dance, play cards, and who are immoral in their lives. _____

Miss _____, and Miss _____, Miss _____ is an infidel, I am informed. I suppose you know _____ and his wife. They lead all the dancing crowd. There are a number that I have been unable to find out about. A number of those who dance are immoral and cigarette fiends. If I can find out anything further, I will let you know.

"Now there are some good men on the faculty. _____ is a good man. He is a member of the Christian Church, and I am informed is a Christian gentleman. _____ is superintendent of the Baptist Sunday School and is well qualified for the position he holds. I had a talk with him this morning and don't think you will make a mistake in retaining him in his present position. _____ is one of the best qualified men in the University, and I would like to see you oust _____ and, it possible put _____ in his place. Miss _____ is the assistant in Music. She is one of the finest Christian girls I have met, is a member of our church and our organist. I don't know what she will apply for but wish you would use your influence to get her put up as high as possible. She is well qualified, and I would like to see her get the place of Miss _____, at least.

"I asked Professor _____, principal of the _____ School, to write me. If there is a chance to get him in, do so. He is a strong Southern Methodist and would be a great help to us here. Miss _____ asked me to write you. I guess you know her. She lived at _____ quite a while, is a member of the _____ and a good, deserving girl. She has an AB from the _____ Female College.

"Do your best to get as many strong Methodists on the faculty as possible. Have you heard anything further about the assistant secretary under _____? Write me a long letter and tell me what you think of things.

"With best wishes ever, your friend," (etc).

"I want to assure you in behalf of my wife that she, escaped enumeration in that vast array of blanks.

"I said that Parrington meant much in my life. He did, both as a teacher and as a personal friend. Maybe it was his tendency toward free wheeling with what in the early 1900's was regarded as the Moral Code—maybe that had something to do with my personal affection for him. Anyway, here's a story that has to do with me—and if the story hadn't happened I wouldn't be here tonight as a graduate of Oklahoma University.

"I mentioned that the Kappa Alphas had landed—not long after the turn of the century. It was the University's first fraternity. It tended somewhat away from the straight and narrow path. It was definitely not in attunement with the Reverend Linebaughs or the Reverend Morgans.

"One beautiful night in June, just as final exams

for the year were in progress, someone at the Kappa Alpha House suggested that all the Brothers chip in and buy a keg of beer. Place, about two blocks north of the President's house on Boyd Avenue.

"Beer then topped cigarettes on the sin score board.

"It happened that I had a date that night. I remember leaving my girl friend and standing on the corner in the moonlight about 10:30, meditating as to whether to join the boys. I could hear barber shop singing down the street. To join them, or to go home, that was the question. I wasn't living at the fraternity house but at my sister's, Mrs. J. W. Sturgis. Stern will power supported me—for a change. I went home and worked on a final exam.

"Two mornings later Monroe Osborne, President Boyd's secretary, later a member of the Supreme Court of Oklahoma, showed up and said that Dr. Boyd wanted to see me, pronto. Naturally, I was pronto.

"I have called you in to tell you that you are fired from the University," he said. "You needn't come back next year."

"What for?" I queried.

"For being in that noisy Kappa Alpha party Tuesday night."

"Which Tuesday night?" I inquired.

"Last Tuesday night," said he.

"I wasn't there," I countered.

"You've never lied to me yet," said Dr. Boyd.

"What were you doing?"

"I had a date," I replied.

"With whom?" asked he.

"Your daughter," I answered.

"Well," he laughed. But after thinking it all over he said, "Nevertheless, the fact that you weren't there was clearly an accident. So on general principles don't come back."

"Professor Parrington went to bat for me from time to time during the summer months, and at last Dr. Boyd relented late in the fall. I had two more years—relatively discreet years, if I do say it myself.

"So, no wonder I have a soft spot in my heart personally as well as a vast admiration professionally for Professor Vernon L. Parrington.

"Sequel: Some four years after the Kappa Alpha beer party, I was working as a reporter on *The Daily Oklahoman* and was fortunate enough to be assigned to cover the opening of the Morris Packing Plant, Oklahoma City's first multi-million dollar industry.

"To acquire 'local color' as it's called in the newspaper trade, I was walking the broad plank which tops the fencing between the pens that hold the cattle. A vast expanse of animals stretched around me. Naturally, not wanting to be stomped to death, I was moving carefully and with head down, watching my step.

"But first—as the hucksters say on the radio—let's get back to Norman and that night in June when with a discretion undreamed of at the time I didn't join the boys.

"During that party, as I have previously indicated there was song and clatter.

"Back of the Kappa Alpha House was the residence of Kirby Prickett, the University's chief, and in those days only, janitor. Kirby kept a cow. The cow became nervous about the singing in the moonlight, which was momentarily picking up tempo. The cow finally broke tether and was not recovered during my remaining days in college, or thereafter.

"A cow in 1906 was worth \$40. Its loss added much heat to Dr. Boyd's appraisal of the whole matter. For Dr. Boyd was very fond of Kirby, who was a hard-working and efficient fellow, and deservedly popular around the campus.

"Then, on that day, years later, when I was procceding, eyes down, surrounded by that sea of cattle I stopped just short of bumping head on into another man who was coming from the opposite direction on the same board walk. I looked up. It was Kirby Prickett. And the only thing that occurred to me to say was:

"My God! Kirby. Are you still looking for that cow?"