

Dr. Sturgis Dies at 78

Dr. James Wellings Sturgis, 78, veteran faculty member at the University, died recently at his home in Norman. Professor emeritus of classical languages since 1943, Sturgis was the oldest faculty member in point of service, having joined the staff in 1900 as an instructor in Latin and Greek.

He is survived by his wife, Ivis Sarah Sturgis, and three children, Margaret, Wellings and Ruth Sturgis; a brother, Dr. Don Sturgis, Annapolis, Maryland, and a sister, Mrs. Margaret Lamadius, Chicago.

Dr. Sturgis was a specialist in the field of philosophy of Latin. Born in 1870 at Bridgeville, Michigan, he attended grade school at Ithaca, Michigan, and in 1888 was graduated from Ithaca High School.

He received the B.A. degree from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, in 1896, and in 1897 was awarded the M.A. degree at Michigan. Later, in 1910, he received his Ph.D. from the same university.

In 1903 he married Miss Ivis Parker. This same year he was appointed head of the University department of Latin and professor of Latin.

In 1937 he was given a reduced teaching schedule and was released from administrative duties because of ill health. He was active in Presbyterian Church work and had taught both a Sunday School and a Bible class.



Arthur Wilmurt (right), associate professor of drama, watches a few of his pupils run through a play rehearsal.

BOOKS

From Ghost to Boom Town

BLACKJACK, by Joseph E. Kelleam, '30-31. *William Sloane Associates. New York \$3.00.*

Joe Kelleam was born in Boswell, Oklahoma. He attended the University of Oklahoma in 1930-31. The information and historical facts for *Blackjack* were collected as a lifetime hobby.

It won't take you long to read *Blackjack*. The action moves swiftly from one incident to another. In the first few chapters, the town of Blackjack is slowly dying. With the advent of Boom Town McGuire it becomes a roaring oil town. Fortunes are made and lost in the length of time it takes to say oil lease.

Blackjack is an imaginary town as, of course, are the characters, who are disreputable, almost without exception. Duke Chandler, gambler, either has half the money in *Blackjack* or is broke and steals a gallon of moonshine to sell, slightly diluted, at \$2.00 a shot. The moonshine was made by Kentucky Allison, town loafer and father of the beautiful "Red," who married almost every man in *Blackjack*, in turn, as they struck it rich. After milking them dry, she would turn to greener pastures.

Men and women who never had more than a few dollars at a time in their lives became rich overnight. Caleb Honubby, quarter Indian, was one of these men. His little shack was soon crowded with expensive china, books and furniture. When the place became too full, the excess was shoved into the yard or given away. A baby-grand piano furnished a roosting place for chickens in the front yard, while a maroon Cadillac was stuck in the muddy road.

Such was *Blackjack* during the boom.

Oklahomans will enjoy this book because the situation is familiar to them. Others will enjoy it because it is thoroughly entertaining.—By *Thellys Gill Hess, '47 bus.*

BOOKS FOR EUROPE

A Friendship Train of books is being organized among all the publishers by Joseph A. Brandt, '21 ba, president of Henry Holt & Company. It will consist of good non-fiction books which are in remainder stock. They will be shipped to Europe for free distribution.

DRAMA SCHOOL—

Something to Be Proud Of

Under the direction of Rupel J. Jones, chairman, the School of Drama at O.U. has, since 1931, grown from scrawny adolescence to respected and dignified adulthood. Its enrollment has doubled since then, and it now occupies a whole little world of its own. It is located in part of the big converted Navy recreation hall at the North Campus.

There 150 theater and radio students learn show business. They study and practice acting, teaching directing, scene designing—even playwrighting.

Jones, heavy-set and prosperous looking ("I've gotten that way since coming here . . ."), is the distinguished kind of gentleman you'd expect to find behind a big business desk. He enjoys showing his classes "how a fat man walks," and his students say he's good. Methodically, he has built the Drama School on three principles: 1—Good faculty; 2—Good student body; 3—Buildings and equipment.

The drama faculty members come from every part of the country. They range from suave, young Pasadena Playhouse actor, Charles B. Briley, '43ba, instructor, to gangling playwright, Arthur Wilmurt. Jones has a knack for choosing the best ones.

Mrs. Helen Lauterer, associate professor, is a tall, olive-complected lady. She has acted under Brock Pemberton and David Belasco and has played in six movies. Former head of costume designing at the Cleveland Playhouse, her touch shows in the costumes of every dramatic production. Last summer she traveled to Europe to study continental drama.

Playgoers also never fail to note the work of Dr. Carl B. Cass, associate professor of drama. He was a director for eight years at the University of Pittsburg. He has taught at the University for three years, and has completed a textbook on voice development. He has started writing another book on one of his specialties, stage makeup.

The scenic studio, under the direction of A. Laurence Mortensen, associate professor, is a shop for the creation of stage settings and props for the drama school plays. Located in an old hangar at the North Campus, about ¼ mile from the main

drama building, the studio is several stories high. It is cluttered with huge stage screens. All the scenery used in Playhouse productions is made by the students in the studio. The shop employs Charles Force, a full-time shop man.

It's hard for the casual observer to realize. Only two short springs ago, in 1946, before the school moved to the North Campus, it had only two classrooms and a small theater on the third floor of Holmberg Hall. "In those days," Jones recalls, "the school was so crowded that we had to rehearse plays in the corridors!"

Now the school has the North Campus auditorium, a Studio Theater and a Little Theater on the North Campus. In these, students hold their labs and give plays every week. Main productions are produced in Holmberg Hall on the Main Campus.

The growing library at the Drama School is already bulging, and books haven't yet been moved from the main library to their new drama library shelves.

The library is based on the lifetime collection of play clippings by Mrs. Winnie Rice Bixler. She was the wife of a pioneer Norman newspaper editor, one of the men who persuaded the state legislature to locate the University in Norman. Neatly scissored and mounted, the clippings fill 30 legal sized filing cabinets! They are taken from every major newspaper in the country.

Mrs. Bixler clipped and filed for a half century. Now students can look up the history of any American play produced since 1900.

High school students gathered at the North Campus during the week of April 12 from all over the state to participate in the Oklahoma High School Dramatics Festival.

The festival was part of the high school speech league state tournament. High school winners of district tournaments gave 41 one-act plays, more than twice the number ever given before. The plays were judged by members of the Drama School faculty.

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Sooners of the '20's assemble. A number of O.U. graduates of two decades ago recently met for a business session in Oklahoma City. Pictured above, left to right, are Earl James, '22, Oklahoma City attorney; Joe Benton, '20ba, '21fa, '41ma, College of Fine Arts staff member; C. C. Beaird (behind Benton), '29m.ed, Norman businessman; Walter D. Snell (with cigar), '24bus, Oklahoma City public accountant; C. Guy Brown (background), '23ba, Veterans Administration official, Oklahoma City; O. B. "Ollie" Martin, '26law, Oklahoma City attorney; Clair Fischer, '20, Norman businessman, and Ted Beaird, '21ba, O.U. Alumni Association.

Fiesta at O.U.

Flags of the two Americas, colorful costumes and Spanish dances marked the traditional celebration of Pan-American Week April 12 through 17 at the University of Oklahoma.

Students of North and South America joined in a week-long program featuring Pan-American speakers, exhibits and south-of-the-border events. Climaxing feature was the fiesta, which drew approximately 350 students and state visitors. Decorations included flags of 21 countries and scenes from Latin America. Honor guests were the 92 students from foreign countries in this hemisphere.

Drama School

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For years the drama students have been learning to write their own plays. Arthur Wilmurt, a new University drama instructor and a playwright for ten years, is teaching his craft to eight students. Playwriting was formerly taught at the University by Robert Whitehand, '33ba, and by Rupel Jones. Whitehand, hailed by critics as a promising young writer, was killed in Army action in 1945.

Four of the student-written one-acts were produced April 12-13 for the high school students participating in the dramatic festival. Plays given were: *The Lion Tamer*, a circus story by William M. Morgan, Oklahoma City sophomore; *That's the Spirit*, a farce on spiritualism by Laurence Swanson, senior from Roosevelt; *Backfire*, a hobo-jumbo melodrama by Larry Suffill, senior from Leewood, West Virginian; *Pavane*, a phantasy by Phelps Manning, sophomore from Mt. Vernon, Iowa.

The young playwrights will now point their products toward producers and sales.

Tall Wilmurt has a mustache. He taught scene design and technical production at Yale University for five years. He came to the University last Fall.

At Yale he was a student of the late George Pierce Baker, teacher of literary giants Eugene O'Neill, Thomas Wolfe and others. Wilmurt describes his student days under Baker in this way: "You were afraid of him. He was very strict. He taught and you learned by trial and error. He made you want to do your best."

Wilmurt's play *The Guest Room*, was produced in 1931 in New York. *Noah*, his adaption from the French play, was produced by Sam French in 1937.



Mrs. Helen F. Lauterer (left), associate professor of drama, fits a dress from the School of Drama wardrobe on Mary Graham, sophomore, while Marjorie Holland, sophomore, repairs another garment.

Wilmurt has just completed working on plays under a Guggenheim fellowship, and is dividing his time between writing and teaching.

He starts his students out rewriting and studying situations. They learn how to develop characters and adapt them to situations. Finally the students write their own plays. Wilmurt counsels them. They progress from one-acts eventually to three-acts.

How successful is the school of drama? Ask Jones. Its alumni are everywhere. Subert Turbyfill, '26ba, '32ma, is director of dramatics in Balboa, Panama. He is assisted by his wife, Mrs. Mary Bladwen Turbyfill, '31fa.

Muriel Monsell Brenner, '32fa, is a Chicago radio woman. Amzie Ellen Strickland, '40fa, is in New York City radio.

Joe Callaway, '41fa, is a former member of the Globe Theater Players and is now a teacher at Michigan State College. Charles Suggs, '40fa, who lived in Ardmore, is head of the dramatics department at Ripon, Wisconsin.

Lonny Chapman, '47fa, is acting with the Henry Street Players in New York.

Van Heflin, '32ba, the Hollywood actor, is another alumnus of the Drama School.

Successful? Friendly Mrs. Kitty Ernst, secretary of the school, smiles and reaches for a telephone. She's a busy woman. Jones' eyes twinkle. He's smiling, too.