

Meet Bob Rucker, Florist Extraordinary

By PAUL A. ANDRES, '50
Sooner Feature Writer

Have you ever met a true connoisseur of the fine art of horticulture and floriculture?

Well, if you've strolled through the campus since 1945 you'll have at least seen the work of a man who is now widely acclaimed as "Norman's Most Original Florist."

He is Robert H. Rucker who served the University as landscape architect and assistant professor of plant sciences from 1945 till the winter of 1948. He still retains the title of consulting landscape architect at the University.

Resigning his post in 1948 to go into private business, Rucker completely designed and planned his new flower market which is the culmination of an ambition he has had "since childhood."

When a land mine blew his right leg off, it merely interrupted the career of this well-known Norman business and civic leader. It was in the Battle of Maknassey on March 23, 1943, that Captain Rucker's leg was blown off in a blistering enemy attack.

He came about as close to being a battle fatality as a man can get without going on the "killed in action" roll. In fact, he was listed as dead, for a few hours, on headquarters records. But after a tour through seven hospitals in Africa and two in the United States, with weeks of suffering and bewilderment, he emerged from the Army's rehabilitation centers with an artificial leg and a determination to go ahead with his interrupted professional career.

Learning to use an artificial leg is not easy. Rucker admits he took his off and threw it as far as he could throw it on at least one occasion. But "Oscar," as he nicknamed it, soon became his friend. Rucker is six feet, two inches tall and weighs "with Oscar" about 210 pounds. He has learned to manipulate the limb so skillfully the disability is imperceptible.

Well qualified by B. S. and M. S. Degrees in landscape architecture received under the nationally known Professor F. W. Hensel of Texas A.&M. College, Rucker has put all his bountiful knowledge and energy into one small but completely equipped "floristry." In the acquisition of his title, Rucker has acquired quite a reputation.

Three of the main innovations combined in the modern air-conditioned shop located on Boyd Street include the following: On the west side is a serpentine wall of fluted aluminum which provides space for



Bob Rucker is seen arranging some flowers for a dinner party. He has received national recognition for his exquisite flower arrangements.

both display and storage. One end of this serpentine wall incloses a writing booth for the convenience of customers. Directly opposite is a booth which will seat four people; it contains space for the latest garden and floral magazines. A special rack is also provided for the current issues of *Sooner Magazine* which he receives by virtue of being a life member of the alumni association.

Above the magazine racks, Rucker has large colored prints of his floral arrangements which are further highlighted by an overhanging box containing ivies, sansevierias, and various other vines.

Recently Rucker received national recognition by winning second place in a national contest for the best centerpiece using gladiolus. His ability in arranging centerpieces is widely known and praised. For many years he had charge of all special decorations both for the University and the President's home; his reputation grew so fast in Norman that no party was consid-

ered a success without a Rucker centerpiece.

The unique service offered by his new shop is the private conference room where-in he can actually project kodachrome photos of his floral arrangements. Clients can readily see what they buy before they purchase, and also have the added advantage of seeing how the flowers will appear on a table, in a church, or in just about any social situation that can be imagined.

The feature of the new store which stops both the student and faculty passers-by of this college town is found in the window displays. Rucker has separated his front display windows into just that many departments. The smaller window—"the attention-getter"—is termed the "educational department." In this window an effort is made to educate the public to the florist's trade.

The large display window contains current selected floral arrangements highlighted by a background of a modernistic tree effect made of plate glass mirrors.

One of the most unusual displays ever to appear in any florist's window is the fabulous "Bird of Paradise," a plant which truly symbolizes the originality of the new florist.

Additional features of the shop include a completely equipped home-gardner's department, where the usual garden equipment is sold and where Rucker's experienced and valuable advice is given free of charge. Fluorescent lighting eases the eyes of the workers in the rear, while incandescent lighting brings out the natural beauty of the flowers on display.

The entire life of this successful veteran-florist has been tied up with the florist trade. After graduating from Texas A.&M. in 1939, he was employed with the Texas highway department, serving as supervisor of roadside development projects in District 9 with headquarters in Waco. Beginning in 1941, he taught courses in landscape architecture at Sidney Lanier High School until his entrance into the Army late in 1942.

After leaving the Army, he served as landscape architect at Baylor University until 1945, when he came to the University of Oklahoma where he assumed his teaching and landscape duties. Also in his charge were the design, maintenance, and con-

struction of all landscape projects for the three campuses of the University.

Further honors have been bestowed upon him recently. In late 1947, while serving as president of the Norman Rotary Club, the organization won the President's Award for the club having the best all-around program in District 124 of Rotary International. He currently is a member of the board of directors of the Norman Chamber of Commerce and a member of the hospital board.

In the summer of 1947, Rucker attended the Harvard school of landscape architecture, and decided soon afterward to open the new shop. His activities in Norman include a wide variety of decorating and he is currently doing a large amount of the work for dances and parties of both fraternities and sororities.

For Franklin—An Unusual Hobby

Having been on the University of Oklahoma campus only a few short months, Carl Mason Franklin, executive vice president of the University, is one of the best-known and best-liked administrators that the University has ever had.

He's one of the busiest men on the campus too, but he's available at almost any time of the day to greet you with a great big smile and a firm hand-

shake that says "I'm sure glad to see you," even before he speaks a word.

Franklin, who will be 38 years old in March, came to the University well-qualified with a background that commands respect and admiration from the most learned men in America. According to his charming wife, the former Carolyn Craig of Washington Courthouse, Ohio, "he seems to be collecting colleges!"

At any rate, his amazing record certainly makes him well-qualified for the important position he now holds. He received a Bachelor of Arts Degree from Washington State University, Pullman, Washington, in 1931 where he was a member of Beta Theta Pi social fraternity. Shortly after graduation he went to the University of Alaska where he taught accounting for a short while until he was appointed registrar.

Again feeling the scholastic urge, Franklin left Alaska to attend Stanford University, Palo Alto, California, where he attained a Master's Degree in economics in 1935.

To most people two degrees from higher institutions of learning would suffice, but not the extraordinary Mr. Franklin. In 1939 he attended Columbia University in New York City and received a Master's Degree in University Administration. In 1940 Harvard beckoned him, and it was not long till he had earned a Master's Degree in Business Administration graduating with the highest honors including the much-revered Magna Cum Laude citation.

After graduating from Harvard, Franklin was appointed assistant to the president at Ohio State University—a position which he held a year before joining the U.S. Navy. After serving three and a half years in the Pacific and attaining the rank of Lieutenant Commander, he returned to Ohio State for six months—but the urge hit again. There was more "collecting" to be done.

This time he decided to try the University of Virginia and, in 1948 he was graduated first in his class from the Virginia Law School where he was a member of the Order of the Coif, the foremost honorary law society in the nation.

In addition to his many degrees, Franklin belongs to Phi Delta Kappa, national honorary education fraternity; Beta Gamma Sigma, a national faculty honorary business fraternity; Kappa Delta Pi, national honorary education fraternity; and he was a Baker Scholar at the Harvard Business School.

Before coming to the University this fall, Franklin and his wife took the Yale University trip for graduate students through England and Continental Europe.

Franklin was married in 1944 to the former Carolyn Craig who was at the time a Lieutenant J.G. in the W.A.V.E.S. Their first time in Oklahoma was a short stay during their honeymoon, and, according to Mrs. Franklin they like it here "Very much! Fine!" She graduated with a B.A. Degree from Denison College in 1941 and received a B.S. Degree in Library Science from Simmons College, Boston, in 1941. Mrs. Franklin is a member of Delta Gamma Sorority.

Franklin, in addition to his duties as executive vice-president and first assistant to President Cross, has been given the rank of associate professor of law by the University Regents and is instructing in international law. He also serves as the official welcoming committee for various groups that visit the campus and, in his duties as vice-president, often travels throughout the country to interview prospective faculty members.



Bob Rucker, former landscape architect and associate professor of plant sciences at the University (1945-48), is seen writing up an order in his new shop just off the campus on Boyd Street. Middle right, the photographer caught a shot of the current issues of *Sooner Magazine* which Rucker periodically receives as a life member of the Alumni Association.