

The President Speaks

BY DR. GEORGE L. CROSS

May and June provides a more crowded calendar than usual for Dr. Cross. He discusses his activities and clarifies the new housing regulations.



The Fifty-Seventh Annual Commencement Exercises of the University, held on June fifth and sixth, ended with the conferring of degrees on more than 2,000 men and women—the largest graduating class in the history of Oklahoma. The exercises also climaxed a three weeks period of greater activity in University and personal affairs than I had experienced up to that date.

Not anticipating that the Legislature would be in session until late in May with a number of bills pending which would vitally affect the University I had accepted an unusually heavy schedule of speeches, commencement addresses and other appearances throughout the State during the closing weeks of the second semester.

Between May 17 and June 6, I gave talks to professional groups in Tahihina, Okmulgee and Beaver. I had scheduled commencement addresses in Beaver, Oilton, Sallisaw, Idabel, Edmond and Oklahoma Baptist University.

The situation was further complicated by the death of my father on May 30. My father had lived to the ripe old age of ninety-nine years and six months. He was bitterly disappointed when he realized that he could not attain his ambition of living a century. This he might have done had

he not suffered a concussion from a fall which occurred about two weeks before his death.

All in all, the last two weeks in May and the first week in June are weeks that I would not like to re-live. However, I've learned my lesson now and never again will I have a heavy speaking schedule preceding commencement at the University, especially if the spring Legislature is in session.

Of course there are some parts of the period that I remember with great satisfaction. We secured for the baccalaureate and commencement addresses two alumni of the University. Reverend Fred Speakman of the Class of 1940 gave the baccalaureate address. It was the finest baccalaureate sermon that I had ever heard. The Honorable A. P. Murrah of the Class of 1928, now Federal Judge of the Tenth District Court, gave the commencement address. His presentation was outstanding in every respect. I thought to myself when he had concluded his speech that the existence of even two alumni of the quality of Reverend Speakman and Judge Murrah entirely justified the existence of the University of Oklahoma and, in addition, provided the President with an adequate antidote for the many difficulties and frustrations which

he must experience each day.

The fine graduating group of more than 2,000 was a further source of pleasure and pride. I had my usual feeling of disappointment that the class was too large to permit conferring of individual degrees and handshake with each member. To have attempted this would have meant adding at least three hours to the commencement exercises.

I have enjoyed greatly the week since commencement day. For the most part I have had at least two meals at home each day and Mrs. Cross has stopped referring to me as a "transient guest." I have seen my two and one half year old son begin his formal education in the University's Nursery School. I have even made plans for a short fishing trip to Colorado.

Now that it seems obvious that the new turf in the stadium will be as good as ever when we open our home schedule this fall, the only really serious problem confronting the University appears to be that of student housing. The problem does not involve scarcity of housing, although we will have difficulties of that type in the fall, but has reference to the discussions in Norman concerning the University housing regulations. These discussions have created considerable interest throughout many parts of the State, as evidenced by the questions of alumni who returned to the campus for our commencement exercises. I thought it might be well to explain our housing problems and regulations in my page this month.

Before the war the University had only meager housing for women (space for 250 girls) and practically nothing at all for men. The University could not be blamed for this situation. The efforts of President Bizzell to obtain legislative permission to construct dormitories during the late thirties and why these efforts were unsuccessful are probably well known to all who will read this page.

Despite the prewar absence of University housing, an enrolment of over 6,500 was made possible in 1939-40 by the fact that there were over 550 approved houses for students in Norman and many hundreds of students commuted from Oklahoma City and other nearby points.

During the war housing at the University was not a problem because of the decreased enrolment. However, when the war was over we found to our dismay that less than 50 of the original 550 rooming houses for students would be available. The rest had been converted to apartments for the housing of naval personnel or had been diverted to other uses. This created a serious problem for the University. Especially serious was the lack of housing for women students. We tried several expedients, such as trying to adapt the



President George L. Cross was needled by two youthful and beautiful nurses (Wayne Barrett, fine arts junior, Norman, and Mike Crawford, speech junior, Baltimore, Maryland) at the Faculty-Senior softball game late in April. Throughout the game representatives of the Independent Mens Association of which organization the two nurses are members assisted the ailing faculty players. Dr. Cross umpired.

Waves' barracks on the North Naval Base to the use of women, and later we experimented with housing women in the Bachelors' Officers Quarters at the South Base. Neither the young women nor the parents were satisfied with these arrangements, and we realized that it would be necessary for us to construct some houses for women on the main campus.

In the meantime, enrolment of women at the University of Oklahoma had gradually declined until during the fall of 1946, there were 9,600 boys and only 2,400 girls. This ratio of boys to girls was, of course, entirely out of proportion to what one might expect in a state university. In other state universities with adequate housing facilities for women, the ratio is rarely greater than three boys to one girl, but it had become common knowledge that if a young woman planned to go to the University of Oklahoma she must have good prospects of joining a sorority, for otherwise she would have little chance of finding satisfactory housing.

In order to bring more girls to the University of Oklahoma it was decided to issue bonds totaling over two million dollars and construct housing for 848 girls. Because construction costs had been very high in the postwar period we realized that it would not be possible to retire these bonds from the proceeds of that housing project exclusively. However, Hester and Robinson Halls, housing 250 girls, are owned debt free by the University and the income from these residential halls was pledged toward the retirement of the bond of the new project.

The new women's housing will be ready for occupancy in September, 1949. The 848 girls will live in groups of 52, separated by fire walls. Each group of 52 will have its own counselor, lounge and organized social activities. A centrally placed dining hall and grand lounge will serve the entire 848. This housing for young women is among the finest in the nation.

However, at the time the financing was being planned it was found that the bonds could not be sold unless the Regents of the University were willing to guarantee that they would make every effort to keep the new facilities occupied, even to the extent of requiring the students to live in University housing if necessary. This was a reasonable provision of the bond contract because only the income from women's housing at the University is pledged toward the retirement of these bonds. The bonds do not constitute an obligation of the State of Oklahoma.

It should be added that this situation exists commonly on other campuses wherever such revenue bonds have been issued, and the housing regulations of other colleges and universities are approximately the same as those of the University of Oklahoma.

When we published our regulations this spring—regulations to the effect that students would be required to live in University housing to the extent that such housing is available, the announcement caused much concern to some Norman rooming house operators who foresaw reduced incomes from their housing projects. Unfortunately, this concern was encouraged and promoted by certain individuals who have, or have had, political aspirations.

Actually, there is little or no cause for concern. The University controls apartments for 636 students, women's housing for 1,098 students and men's housing for 1,100 students. This makes a total of only 2,834 students out of a student body of 12,000 who could possibly be affected by the regulations of the University.

The City of Norman has housing for only 2,816 students and has been able to provide facilities for

only 214 single women. When the University's facilities and the Norman facilities are added together, we find that there is housing for only 5,650 independent students, plus an unknown number of apartments for married students. Of course the fraternities and sororities can take care of an additional 1,750 men and women. But in view of the fact that over 12,000 students enrolled in the University last fall and a similar number is expected to enrol next fall, it will be clear that a housing surplus is not to be expected in the immediate future.

As a matter of fact, there will be a housing shortage again this fall for married students and single men. The University is planning to assign the surplus men to remodeled barracks buildings or the Bachelors' Officers Quarters on the South Campus.

There will, of course, be a certain amount of inconvenience to the Norman rooming house operators who insist on housing women, because the University will have new houses for 848 girls on September 1. However, it should be recalled that the City of Norman has provided housing for only 214 girls five years after the close of the war and, therefore, no large number of Norman operators can be affected by our regulations.

If some of the Norman operators who have been provided housing for young women would care to accept men for a year or two and thus relieve in part the very great shortage of housing for single men, there would be no difficulty in filling all private housing available to students in Norman.

In other words, if the University and the City of Norman can plan together in an attempt to solve the housing problem, better and more efficient housing can be made available and there will be benefits both to the University and to Norman. Such cooperation now seems possible, following a conference held on June 11, attended by representatives of the University and representatives from the Association of Norman Home Owners on June 11.

At this meeting several misunderstandings concerning the intentions of the University were cleared up and a basis was laid for some cooperative planning. The University does not expect to go into the housing business on an extensive scale. It is our belief, however, that all freshmen, with certain exceptions, should be assigned to University operated housing. The new houses for women will enable us to take care of all freshmen girls for the next several years, but we have facilities for less than a third of our freshmen boys.

We believe that if the freshmen boys could be accommodated in University housing in groups of about 50, each supervised by a University counselor, fewer of them would fail scholastically or become discouraged and leave school. The mortality at present is very high—much higher, we think, than it should be. Within the next five years we hope to be able to construct housing for men sufficient to meet the needs of our entire freshman class, and plans to this end are underway.

It is suggested occasionally that the enrolment at the University may be expected to decline during the next few years because so many veterans are graduating each year. According to a communication issued by the American Council on Education dated April 29, 1949, this is not likely to be the case. This communication states that there is a "backlog of approximately 3,000,500 veterans who have entered into training but discontinued it before completing their first entitlement, some 3,000,000 others who have taken up their certificates but have not entered training and approximately 120,000 per month who are still applying for their certificates. About 40% of all veterans are high school graduates."

Veterans have until 1951 to begin their college work and as that date approaches it is expected that many new veterans will appear on our campuses. The release from the American Council on Education goes on to summarize as follows: "Combining all of these facts it appears probable that while a large group of veterans will graduate this June, there will not be a decline in total enrolment this fall and there will probably be a slight increase in the freshman class over that of 1948."

With the population of the United States increasing about two million each year, and with the birth rate of recent years about a million higher each year than during the thirties, it seems clear that enrolment in higher institutions will not decrease at all but will gradually increase during the next ten years from last fall's total of about two and a half million to three million by 1960.

The University of Oklahoma, under these circumstances, should look forward to serving some 15,000 students by the fall of 1960. There is little likelihood that housing surpluses will be experienced in Norman any time in the foreseeable future.

(Faculty Briefs Continued)

- ▶ Charles "Bud" Wilkinson, athletic director, Walter Kraft, director of the physical plant, and Bill Cross, '09ba, auditor of intercollegiate athletics, attended a Big Seven Conference meeting in Lincoln, Nebraska, May 18-22.
- ▶ Leonard Good, professor of art, and Wendell Tomberlin, '38fa, assistant professor of art, attended the Conference of Midwestern College Art Departments held at the University of Colorado May 4-9. They were members of the panel discussions.
- ▶ G. Raymond Stone, assistant professor of psychology, attended a meeting of the Midwestern Psychological Association in Chicago from April 27-May 1. He presented one paper and co-authored two other papers that were presented.
- ▶ Walter W. Kraft, director of the physical plant, and John H. Kuhlman, '30-'34, Kenneth E. Farris, '43bus, and Bennie Shultz, all of the physical plant department, attended the National Meeting of Association of Physical Plant Administrators of Universities and Colleges held at Fayetteville, Arkansas, May 15-18.
- ▶ Henry S. Robinson, associate professor of classical languages, left for Princeton, New Jersey, June 5 to do research in green ceramics at the Institute for Advanced Study. He will complete the course September 1.
- ▶ E. D. Meacham, '14ba, dean of the college of arts and sciences, attended a meeting of the Mississippi Valley Conference of Deans of Liberal Arts Colleges in State Universities at Oxford, Mississippi, May 3-7.
- ▶ Charles "Bud" Wilkinson was in Chicago April 14-16 contacting prospective students and athletes for the University.
- ▶ Theodore J. Ledeen, general-secretary of YMCA, and Betty Ezell, executive-director of YWCA, attended the faculty consultation on Religion in Higher Education in Dallas, April 30-May 1.
- ▶ Dr. Ronald B. Shuman, professor of business management, attended the American Association of Collegiate Schools of Business meetings in Madison, Wisconsin, April 21-23.
- ▶ Harry E. Hoy, chairman of the department of geography, Ralph E. Olson and John W. Morris, '30ed, both associate professors of geography, attended meetings of the Southwest Social Science Association in Fort Worth April 14.
- ▶ Roscoe Cate, '26ba, financial vice president,