

SOONER MAGAZINE

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The Cover

Posing for the *Sooner* photographer in their native costumes are Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Goto of Hawaii. Living in a prefab is a bit different from the palm tree atmosphere of the place they call home, but their smiles indicate that they're thoroughly enjoying Oklahoma. Mr. Goto has been enrolled in the University school of architecture since September, 1948.

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Riding the Sooner Range

FOR TED BEAIRD

Thousands of Sooner sons and daughters have raced the trails these fifty odd years while Riding the Sooner Range! Like thousands have made contributions in various fields of endeavor after enjoying and benefiting from professional training at O.U.

A short while ago Paul Swain, '48ba, (feature writer for The Daily Oklahoman) singled out one of these O.U. chaps in an excellent human interest yarn. The "chap", JACK WILSON, '39bs in Bus., '42Law, formerly of ENID and Norman, now in post World War II days of OKLAHOMA CITY, is representative as a cross-section of thousands of others whose experiences, while pursuing professional training—are looked back upon with pleasure and appreciation. Yes, Jack Wilson is truly an O.U. Sooner! A Sooner who, while still in Enid high school represented his state as a National Orator and public speaker in various sections of the nation. A Sooner who was a student leader in his undergraduate and graduate days on the O.U. campus. A Sooner who made "his way up" (and his contribution) as an officer of the U. S. Army in World War II.

But let Paul Swain tell you of Jack Wilson the attorney of *today!* He wrote—

"The voice that put Jack Wilson through law school is working for the county now—in a different way.

"No one around the courthouse, least of all his colleagues in the county attorney's office, knows it, but Wilson was once a professional entertainer. He scoffs at the idea that he was 'good', but his warbling and keyboard work gave him a legal education—and he insists, a lot of fun.

"His singing and piano are strictly for laughs now, but once they were a big help. A legal education is expensive.

"He writes songs, too. But here again he's inclined to belittle his ability. Nothing he's written has been published, but one of his songs did throw Fred Allen's national network radio show into a turmoil and later closed a Shanghai nightclub.

"The young goodlooking lawyer can't help grinning as he recalls that song and the two incidents.

"The first was in December, 1941, when Allen, the radio comedian, had guests artists on his program from over the nation. The guests had to be talented students to be eligible for the expense-paid trip to New York.

"Wilson, then a senior law student from Enid, auditioned for the chance at the University of Oklahoma and won the trip. The song he sang in the audition was 'the' song. It was one of his own, a novelty number he called 'Crackers in Bed.'

"It was strictly a screwball thing," he recalls today.

"It was a ballad in which a young man tells the girl he's about to marry that there are many causes for divorce, but he can insure their marital bliss—if only his bride won't eat crackers in bed.

"When Wilson arrived in New York—the day after Pearl Harbor—rehearsals for the big show began. He was to serve as 'straight man' for a few minutes of Allen's patter about Oklahoma and the University and then he was to sing his 'Crackers' song.

"Al Goodman's orchestra made an arrangement of the tune and that in itself was a thrill for Wilson. "I'd never heard an orchestra play anything I had written," he says.

"They rehearsed Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. The big broadcast was set for Wednesday night.

"It was a funny thing though, about that song," Wilson remembers. 'Allen never did seem to like it as much as the rest of his staff.'

"He knows now that his feeling about Allen's reaction to his song should have told him something.

"But I was so tickled about the whole thing, I didn't think too much about it," the attorney says. "I kept thinking of all the screwy songs that had caught on and made their writers rich—songs like 'The Music Goes 'Round' and things like that'.

"After the final rehearsal that Wednesday, the producer of the show told Wilson to 'take the rest of the day off' and come back to the studio before broadcast time. So Wilson went out to see some more of New York.

"When he arrived at the studio 45 minutes before broadcast time, everything was in a turmoil. Allen had decided against the 'Crackers' song. He said it wasn't copyrighted and he hadn't been able to get clearance for it.

"'Heck,' Wilson says, 'I knew it wasn't copyrighted. It had never been on paper until Goodman's arranger worked it over.'

"They wanted to know what else he could sing. "I told them nothing—I'd been in law school all winter and didn't have another number.'

"They finally settled on 'Louisiana Lullaby.' It was a simple tune and just the kind Wilson always sang—but he didn't know all of it.

"In that 45 minutes, with the help of a staff musician and members of Goodman's orchestra 'filling in' in Wilson's key, the 'Lullaby' was learned by all of them.

"I was scared stiff," Wilson says today. "I'd never go through that again for anything."

"Allen kept telling me all along that every-



The man whose Cracker song had international complications, Jack Wilson, '39bus, '42Law, Oklahoma City, teaches his son Tim in the fundamentals of the keyboard.

thing would work out. He said 'it always does'—and it did. I have a record of that broadcast and it didn't sound bad at all.'

"That's one reason Wilson remembers his 'Crackers' song so well. The other took place after Wilson had his law degree and was with the 14th airforce in Shanghai, China, after V-J day.

"When American forces entered the parts of China that had been occupied by the Japanese, the Military police restrictions were 'pretty rigid' over everything, Wilson says. Most restaurants and night-clubs in Shanghai were 'off limits' to military personnel, but one place operated by a White Russian was not.

"A bunch of us went to this place one night to hear the girl vocalist with the band,' the attorney said. 'She was a White Russian, too, and sang in Chinese, Russian, French and English—she had to, because her audience was so mixed.'

"After the girl—Node was her name—had finished her program, she asked if anyone in the audience could play the piano.

"I'd played a lot at the officers' club and the

boys all started shoving me out on the floor, so I sat down and played a few numbers,' Wilson said.

"It was a good piano—the best I saw in all China—and I was enjoying myself.'

"Wilson played several numbers while Node sang. Then he started teaching her his 'Crackers' song.

"Everyone was having a big time when the manager came rushing up and gesturing at his watch,' he says. 'We couldn't understand what was going on until the girl told the crowd that we had already stayed a few minutes past the curfew, so we all left.

"The next night we went back and there was a big 'off limits' sign on the front door. The military police had closed the place because we stayed too late the night before—and we stayed too late because I was teaching that girl my song.

"It was all perfectly innocent and certainly wasn't the fault of the fellow who ran the place.

"Maybe you think I didn't take a ribbing from all the guys.'

"Wilson started his piano playing at the age of 7 when his mother 'stood over my brother and me

with a bat and made us practice.' He says now that both he and the brother 'hated it' and his parents decided after three or four months to give it up.

"Then when I was in junior highschool at Enid, I decided I wanted to play.'

"He doesn't know how to read music to this day except for the 'simple melody,' but he learned to put the bass with the rest.

"It's funny about my piano playing,' he grins. 'I don't know the first thing about music. My Dad always said I got away with murder at a piano.'

"But that's enough for most people. It's pleasing to the ear just as his baritone voice is.

"That voice hasn't had any formal training either, but Wilson knows and always has known its limitations.

"I have always stuck to simple things. No amount of pressure or requests got me into anything I wasn't sure about.'

"Wilson had a 15-minute radio show during the summer months on WKY all during his school sessions at the University. He also sang on KOMA and KOCY at various times. At the University he was student manager of WNAD, the school's station.

"It was a lot of fun in those days and it helped a lot with school expenses, but those days are gone.

"It's nothing more than an interesting hobby now to amuse myself and amaze my 4-year-old son. I'm too busy being a lawyer to give it any more time or thought.'

"The son? Wilson plans to make a piano player out of him, too."

Eds Note: The son? Sure, the son Tim—come some fifteen years in the future will, not unlike thousands of other sons, be doin' a lot of fancy Riding of the Sooner Range on O.U.'s campus.—T. M. B.

South Campus Site of Golf Course

The South Campus has been selected as the site for the new University 18-hole golf course. The University board of regents authorized President George L. Cross to start plans for the course.

Perry Maxwell, prominent golf course architect, has been negotiating with the University on the plans. No definite arrangements have been made yet.

The old golf course was abandoned when the new track was laid out over a portion of the course. This eliminated two holes from the 9-hole course. The course has been serving double duty the last few years, accommodating both University students and Norman residents. Norman residents are now going ahead with plans to build their own golf course.

Counselors Give Shorts The Eye

The counselors of men and women at the University turned thumbs down on a request by students to wear shorts to classes. Long faces and longer attire greeted the counselor's refusal.

Students had been crying about classrooms that were close seconds to Turkish baths. They decided that shorts were a partial answer. "Nix" said the counselors. In a joint decree they said, "We suggest that shorts should not be considered suitable dress for classes."

Although it was phrased in the form of a suggestion, students thought it was meant to be taken seriously.