

Rumors Fade and Die

Continuing the History of the Alumni Association and of its Presidents

By Paul A. Andres, '50ba

During the depression years, to be president of anything, was a large undertaking, and to be chosen to lead the University's organized alumni was not the easiest job available. However, men were found with all the qualities of leaders. This month's installment carries the Association and its presidents through the depression to the war years. 1934-35 Lewis R. Morris, '15ba, '15ma, '17 Law, formerly county attorney for Oklahoma County and district judge, was a most ardent supporter of the University. His interest in the affairs of the University is shown by the fact that, before his death in January, 1949, he accepted many responsibilities in carrying on the work of the school and in maintaining the interest of the many thousands of alumni, scattered all over the state and nation—and the world.

The first year of his college life was spent at the University of Texas. In the fall of 1911 he entered the University of Oklahoma Law School. As soon as his first year of law was completed, he transferred to the School of Arts and Sciences. That was in 1912—and this time he stayed in the Arts and Science School until he earned a Bachelor of Arts Degree and a Master's degree both in 1915.

After receiving these two degrees he went back to the law school and received his Law Degree in 1917. He may have taken more time in getting his law degree than his fellow law brothers, but he came to the University with a wide general background which certainly proved invaluable to him in his most successful career as an attorney.

Morris was a very active student in campus affairs and was recognized especially for his oratorical ability and his persuasive powers as a college debater. In 1916, he won the Harlow Oratorical contest and represented the University in the state meet. In the annual Inter-Society Debate contest, he was a speaker for the House and Senate Literary Societies.

He played class football, baseball and basketball and served as president of the Y.M.C.A. Cabinet. He was a Garber Cup contestant, a prohibitive orator, a member of the *University Oklahoman* board and a member of the Young Men's Democratic Club.

While in the law school he was recognized as one of the most capable and enthusiastic students—and his fellow "lawyers" recognized his leadership to the extent that he was elected president of the law class for one year.

Some of his other extra-curricular activities included membership in Check-Mate, Phi Delta Phi and Sigma Nu social fraternity.

His graduation from Law school in 1917 came at an inopportune time for soon afterwards he was called into service as a buck private and corporal in the 36th Division of the A.E.F.

After the war he practiced law continuously in Oklahoma City. He was formerly associated with the law firm of Pruiett, Sniggs, Patterson and Morris—and later from 1923 to 1930—with the firm of Morris and Tant.

In 1930 he staged a successful campaign for county attorney of Oklahoma County and remained in that capacity until named district judge in April, 1943.

He was a member of the Oklahoma County Bar Association and the state and national bar associations—and took a very active interest in civic projects. He was a member of the board of directors of the Oklahoma City Chamber of Commerce—a member of the Christian Church, the Y.M.C.A. and the Community Fund. In 1938, he was named Oklahoma City's most useful citizen and thus became the first elected public official to receive this coveted designation.

His interest in the University is evidenced by the fact that he was a member of the executive board of the University; a past president of the alumni club of Oklahoma City as well as having served a very successful term as president of the Alumni Association.



LEWIS R. MOORIS
1934-35

1935-36; 1936-37 The two administrations of EARL FOSTER, '12ba, '13Law, begins to bring the Association up to date because, although there have been 12 other presidents since then, there has been only one *Range Rider*.

At the meeting of October 4, 1936, Frank S. Cleckler resigned to accept an appointment as Regional Manager for Oklahoma of the United States Veterans' Administration.

At this same meeting Ted Beaird, '21ba, a member of the staff of the University Public Relations Department, was selected to hold the reins of the alumni stallion.

It will be interesting for all readers to see the minutes during this period because of the many little problems that arose. I will take the liberty of quoting one particular paragraph which I'm sure will bring smiles to the faces of many of you. It reads—

"After some discussion of the recent public proposal of a member of the Board of Regents of the

University and comment thereon by a metropolitan newspaper that Freshman and Sophomore work at the University be eliminated, it appeared that this body is unanimously opposed to such changes in state educational policy."

The proposal was apparently of such gravity that a special committee was appointed to "discuss" the matter with the president and all others concerned. At any rate, the freshmen and sophomores still had a home at the University after this affair was settled.

Earl Foster is among the approximately 12 lawyers who have headed the Alumni Association. Graduating from the law school in 1913, he entered general practice until 1917 when he became county attorney of Creek County. He was associated with the firm of Hughes and Foster of Sapulpa nine years and from 1927 to 1930, he was a member of the Supreme Court Commission. Named to this high judicial position in 1927, Judge Foster was one of the few Oklahomans in high office against whom no complaint or accusation was ever voiced.

Going back into private practice, Foster was associated with Darrrough and Foster, Oklahoma City, from 1930 to 1936. He became oil and gas conservation attorney for the Oklahoma Corporation Commission from 1936 to 1944 and at present is the executive secretary of the Interstate Oil Compact Commission.

At the University Foster was the first president of the student council and helped draft the student constitution. He was editor-in-chief of the *Umpire*, the predecessor of the *Oklahoma Daily*, and while interested in campus journalism helped secure the Oklahoma chapter of Sigma Delta Chi, professional journalistic fraternity. When he was editor, in 1911-12, the *Umpire* was a bi-weekly paper.

In addition to his membership in Sigma Delta Chi, Foster was a member of Sigma Alpha Epsilon, Phi Delta Phi and Delta Sigma Rho (he debated for the varsity against Missouri), and of the Senate and House of Representatives debating societies.

Politics interest Judge Foster, but only in the sense that any avocation interests any normal man. His real interest, apart from law, lies in civic work. Perhaps the basis for that attitude was laid in college when he went out for football. "I always wanted to play football and went out regularly," he says, adding with a smile, "but I guess I was just a scrub. But we must have our team of scrubs—I have helped to develop some mighty good football teams in my time."

It is but a step from that spirit of making a good football team—whether you wear the "O" or whether you have helped make the men who wear it—to making life more liveable for your fellowmen. In Creek County, particularly, Earl Foster is known for his interest in community progress. He served on the board of directors of the Sapulpa Chamber of Commerce and was president of the chamber one year. During his administration the industrial drive that revived Sapulpa was launched.

He has served as president of the Creek County Humane Society, the Sapulpa Rotary Club and the District Rotary Club.



EARL FOSTER
1935-36; 1936-37

1937-38 The presidency of LOWERY H. HARRELL, '16Law, is remembered because the Association completely divorced itself from all entanglements and became not only a financially free but an independent organization. It is also remembered because County Advisory Councils were set up in almost every one of Oklahoma's 77 counties.

The Association won a major victory that year too. Through the efforts of the executive secretary and hundreds of alumni, a quiet but intensive campaign was launched to get a prominent alumnus on the State Board of Regents. The efforts were rewarded well when Governor Marland appointed Harrell to the board.

As an attorney, oil man, soldier, civic leader and sincere friend of the University, Harrell has made a success of everything in which he participated.

Although a successful oil man and soldier, he now devotes his time to general law practice as a member of the Ada law firm, Busby, Harrell and Trice. The firm's business is largely for oil and gas companies and Mr. Harrell's specialty is Indian land titles.

The road to success in law and business was no easy one. He was forced to rely on his own work at the University to pay all his expenses, and he ran a laundry agency, got himself elected treasurer of the student association for three years, and was treasurer of the Athletic Association. Those jobs were elective and paid fairly good salaries, so it may be deduced that he acquired a practical knowledge of politics at an early age.

During the summer terms he worked in the University treasurer's office—spending twelve months in the year on the campus during his college days.

He was a member of Kappa Sigma, social fraternity, and was a charter member of Phi Alpha Delta, law fraternity.

After his graduation from the Law School in 1916, he practiced law for a time in Yale, Oklahoma, but the following April he entered the first Officers Training Camp at Fort Roots, Little Rock, Arkansas. He was commissioned a first lieutenant in the Field Artillery at the close of the training course, and was assigned to the 87th Division. He was instructor in field artillery and equitation in the third Officers Training Camp for a time, but later was released from that duty and served overseas for eight months. During his service he was

promoted to the rank of captain in the Field Artillery.

When discharged from the army in April, 1919, Mr. Harrell returned to his home town of Ada and began practice of law with Orel Busby, '14 Law. This partnership continued until Busby was elected district judge.

In August of 1937 the firm was reformed following the resignation of Busby as a member of the State Supreme Court. Albert Trice, '12, Hugo, also became a member of the firm.

Until 1937 Harrell was an active oil man as secretary and treasurer of an oil company that had extensive holdings in the Fitts field near Ada and in East Texas. In 1937 he and his associates sold out and he retired from the oil business to devote all of his time to the practice of law.

He was active in the National Guard for a number of years, entering it as a captain in 1921. He had the rank of lieutenant colonel when he resigned in 1932 because of the pressure of his business affairs.

Although always known as an unusually hard worker, Harrell has found time to be a Rotary Club member and to participate in civic affairs. He



LOWERY H. HARRELL
1937-38

was president of the Ada Chamber of Commerce in 1938.

As a student, Harrell belonged to Tabasco, the Inter-Fraternity Council, the Williams Club Court and the Glee Club. He was also a member of the yearbook staff, treasurer of the Student Association and served as an assistant financial clerk for the University.

There is enough of the soldier in Lowrey Harrell that he speaks plainly, even bluntly, when he believes that it is his duty to do so in order to reach an objective. At the same time, he is enough of a lawyer to recognize both sides of a question. The combination has proved a good one for the University.

1938-39 CHARLES B. MEMMINGER, '14ba, '33 Law, of Atoka, became president of the Association after having served as vice president the year previous, and acting president after the resignation of Lowery Harrell who was appointed on the University Board of Regents.

His year of presidency marked the tenth anniversary of *Sooner Magazine* and also its conversion from a ten-month publication to a regular monthly magazine.

The Executive Board also authorized formation of a Forty-Year Club for alumni who have been

out of school forty years or more. The first alumni to be eligible for the club were C. Ross Hume, '98 ba, Dr. Roy Stoops, '98ba, Lawrence W. Cole, '99 ba, L. L. Hefley, '99ba, and Roscoe S. Helvie, '99ba.

Memminger was an excellent president and served his University well. He's the type of a fellow who can tackle anything and do a good job of it. He's the kind of man who is always busy, yet can find time to take on an additional job if it is something worthwhile that needs to be done for the good of the community or the state. As a banker, state legislator, soldier, civic worker and attorney, he's the type of substantial citizen whose life of service reflects credit upon his alma mater.

Here's a partial list of his past and present responsibilities: president of the University of Oklahoma Association, president of the Kiamichi Production Credit Association, president of the Kiamichi chapter of the Reserve Officers Association, vice president of the Atoka Chamber of Commerce, vice chairman of the administrative committee of Section 18 of the State Bar Association, member of the board of directors and former president of the Atoka Building and Loan Association, elder in the Atoka Presbyterian Church, member of the Atoka County Excise Board, district judge advocate of the American Legion and membership chairman for the Atoka Post and former member of the Legion's state executive committee, and major in the United States Army Reserve Corps. Memminger has also served as a director of the Federal Land Bank of Wichita, the Bank of Co-Operatives of Wichita, the Federal Intermediate Credit Bank of Wichita and the Production Corporation of Wichita. He has been associated with Boys' State since 1940.

This list is all the more impressive in view of the fact that Memminger takes each of these positions seriously, and takes on new responsibilities only when he feels that he can make a definite contribution. Thoroughness with which he works is shown by the fact that his first act when he became president of the Alumni Association was to make a careful study of Association records and financial statements so that he would have a full background of information to guide him in his work as head of the Association during his term.

His interest in politics dates from the time he served as a page in the very first session in the State Senate of Oklahoma—1907-08. He was elected a member of the State Senate in 1930—thus becoming the first son of a state senator to



CHARLES MEMMINGER
1938-39

be elected to the state senate—and served to 1934. He did not run for re-election in 1934. He served as chairman of the Atoka County central committee and treasurer of the State League of Young Democrats.

While a member of the Senate, Memminger was vice president of the committee that investigated the University of Oklahoma during the early thirties. While showing no special favors to the University, he was instrumental in seeing that the full facts were presented fairly in the hearings, thus doing his University invaluable service.

Beginning his business career as bookkeeper in the Atoka State Bank in 1914, he soon became cashier. After serving in the army during the first World War, he returned as cashier of the bank and was cashier and vice president with a controlling interest when he sold out in January, 1929. While 50 banks within 50 miles of Atoka went out of business, this bank had never filed a suit of foreclosure under Memminger's management. He also served as treasurer of the State Bankers Association in 1929.

Although he received a bachelor's degree in 1914, he had taken a half year of law in his senior year, and became interested in law as a profession. When he sold the bank in 1929, he decided to come back to the University and complete a law course. He was admitted to the Bar in 1931 and, as was possible in earlier years, returned to the University to receive his degree in the spring of 1933.

In January, 1934, he went to Wichita, Kansas, as secretary to the newly organized Production Credit Corporation. After two years in this position, Memminger returned to Atoka to live on a farm nearby and take up the practice of law.

Memminger has been active in O.U. alumni affairs for many years and has been a member of the Executive Board off and on for over two decades. He is married to the former Ruth Moore, '20ba, '26bm.

As an undergraduate student, Memminger took part in class basketball, football and baseball, was a member of the publication board in his senior year, and assistant business manager of the *Sooner* yearbook in his junior year. He was cast in the German play in his sophomore year, in the faculty burlesque his junior year and in the senior play in 1914. He was active in student affairs being a member of Kappa Sigma fraternity, Phi Delta Phi, Websterian and Forum debating societies, Teutonia, D.D.M.C. and the Chess Club. He found time to serve on the Y.M.C.A. Cabinet three years and was treasurer of the organization in his senior year.

However, young Memminger wasn't so completely serious as his record of substantial activities might indicate. It was during his time in school that the engineers' smoke stack was first desecrated by the painting of "D.D.M.C." high on the stack. He wasn't one of the two foolhardy students who volunteered to let themselves be pulled up to the top of the smoke stack on a precarious platform drawn by a cable, but he was one of the trustworthy men who held onto the cable at the bottom of the smoke stack and enabled the dangerous painting job to be completed without any fatalities.

That's the kind of a man Charlie Memminger is. You don't find him doing spectacular things to attract public attention, but you find him always with a steady hand on the cable doing his share of the important ground work behind any worthwhile project in his community, state or University.

1939-40 As I have progressed through the various stages of writing this article, I have noticed that somehow, when they need a man to head the

organized alumni of O.U., the executive board generally selects an attorney. Various theories might be advanced to account for this—such as the fact that lawyers take a good deal of interest in public affairs and generally have organizing ability. At any rate, a considerable proportion of the presidents of the University of Oklahoma Association have been lawyers, and when the board met on commencement day 1939 to select a new president, the choice fell to another lawyer.

He was HICKS EPTON, '32Law, a native of the State of Arkansas who worked his way through the University and now is a member of the busy law firm, Horsley, Epton & Culp at Wewoka.

His birth occurred at Bingen, Arkansas, which he locates as "three full wagon greasin's from Nashville, Arkansas." He was named after three preachers, but has dropped the middle name (Byers) and declines to testify as to how well he has followed the precepts of any of them.

Coming to Oklahoma to go to college, he landed at Durant and received the A.B. Degree from Southeastern State College in 1927. Mr. Epton's stay at Durant was notable, he recalls, for the fact



HICKS EPTON
1939-40

that all three years he spent at the college there were under the same president.

After teaching for a year in Durant Highschool, he journeyed on to Norman and the University of Oklahoma which he had in mind as his real destination all along. He wanted to take law. Walking into the office of T. M. Beard, '21ba, then a member of the Extension Division Staff, he said bluntly, "I need a job. I've heard about you and I'd like to work for you."

Something about his personality—his earnestness or the glint of humor in his eyes, or perhaps both—interested Beard and the young man won a tryout. He made good immediately and worked in the same office all the way through school.

Epton describes his law school days like this:

"There for three years I watched the diamond stickpin on Dr. Kulp's tie and learned some oil but more gas law; wondered if Dr. Swinford was really going to push his desk off the rostrum, and learned all about legal procedure except how to proceed and get a client; wandered in the labyrinth of Dr. Cheadle's land titles 'til the Noble Red Men danced around my cot at night; heard all the stories of Dr. Wright, some legal and some otherwise, but all to my edification; was vaccinated with legal bib by Dr. Huggins but doubt if it took;

learned about Lawrence vs. Fox and the British wagon case from Dean Monnet; learned to love, honor and—at times—obey all of them."

In addition to his active participation in debate and oratory, Epton served as law school representative on the Men's Council, which had been established only two years previously by adoption of a new student constitution.

But while Epton was learning about politics and government and public speaking, he was also getting acquainted with a University co-ed, Miss Thelma Pate, '32ba, of Duncan. They were married in September, 1933.

In his student days, Epton won the Avery and Render oratory medals, represented O.U. three years in oratory and debate, was a member of the 1931 debate team that toured the East, defeating Harvard and other schools, and won the Missouri Valley extemporaneous speaking contest in 1930 at St. Louis. He was a member of Pi Kappa Alpha social fraternity.

After receiving his law degree, he returned to Wewoka, which he terms "the Athens of the oil fields," where he has practiced law ever since.

Epton has served as director of the Wewoka Chamber of Commerce, chairman of the Red Cross and community relief drives, and has taken an active part in politics of the county and district.

He has kept in close touch with the University and has served the association in various capacities, including membership on the Executive Board. He was chairman of the board's membership committee during the last year, and he and Mrs. Epton are life members of the Association.

Discussing his responsibilities as president of the Association, he made this statement in a letter dated August 2, 1939:

"Since graduation I have kept in close touch with O.U., have come to know and appreciate the sacrificial zeal of Dr. Bizzell and many of the members of the faculty in their tireless ambition to keep O.U. the brightest star in the whole south-western firmament of education.

"I have come to the definite conviction that no school anywhere offers more in educational advantages to a poor and worthy student, nor which is better managed, nor which has greater possibilities—if politics is kept beyond the moat—than O.U.

"O.U. unlike many schools, is not a luxury—it is a necessity. My humble efforts will for the next year while I am the alumni president, be devoted to letting the people of this state share that conviction."

Epton served as president of the association during one of the most critical times in its history. War was looming over the horizon in more ways than one. The most important, as far as proximity is concerned, was the "cold war" between the state and the University concerning President Bizzell.

I believe that since the situation therein existing is within the memory of the vast majority of readers, that an editorial that appeared in the September 1939 *Sooner* is worthy of recall. Concerning the alumni's viewpoint on the presidency, the editorial stated that:

"As this is written in late August, the summer's crop of rumors and predictions of the imminent summary removal of Dr. W. B. Bizzell as president of the University seem to have faded and died.

"But the published reports aroused widespread interest among alumni, and resulted in informal conferences and visits back and forth across the state among alumni leaders who take a serious interest in the welfare of O.U.

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A Vision Is Fulfilled

"No official action of any kind was taken, as it was decided that none was called for. Nevertheless, the unofficial conferences and correspondence and visits crystallized sentiment among the better informed alumni.

"It can be said that this sentiment is substantially as follows:

"1. The great majority of alumni feel affection and respect for President Bizzell and believe that he has made an outstanding record in developing the University and raising its standards.

"2. Alumni leaders feel that sole responsibility for retaining Dr. Bizzell as president or appointing a new president rests with the Board of Regents and that it would be improper for the organized alumni to make any suggestions or recommendations in a situation like the present, unless invited by the regents to counsel with them.

"3. The alumni are very definitely opposed to any change in the presidency that would involve the University in state politics, or in factionalism within state school circles. Any such move would be fought strenuously by alumni.

"4. Alumni leaders believe that when the time comes that Dr. Bizzell desires to retire from the presidency (which he has indicated he would like to do before many more years as his present responsibilities are a serious burden on his health), the entire nation should be carefully surveyed to secure an outstanding educator and administrator who as president of the University could continue to build and improve the institution entirely free of the handicap of local political or factional affiliations.

"This description of alumni sentiment is unofficial, but it is based on a representative cross-section of opinions from alumni leaders in various professions, in various parts of the state, in different age groups, and in different political camps. The non-political administration of the University is an issue on which they can get together regardless of how different their opinions might be in other walks of life.

"Alumni leaders have not let themselves be stamped by unconfirmed rumors.

"But the published reports, along with the whole changes made in state college presidents, have made University alumni increasingly vigilant. They are working quietly, but no one should make the mistake of assuming that they would stand idly by when any threat is made against the University's hard-won reputation for staying out of politics.

However, in his final report, Epton was able to make a definite official statement of policy. Dr. Bizzell had announced his intention of voluntarily retiring and Epton, speaking to the Board of Regents and the alumni, stated:

"We heartily approve the recent action of the Board of Regents concerning the voluntary retirement of President W. B. Bizzell which becomes effective July 1, 1941. We furthermore commend the Board for its action in honoring Dr. Bizzell as president emeritus. Alumni leaders have the utmost confidence in the members of the Board of Regents and appreciate their efforts in their attempts to build and improve the University and to keep it entirely free of the handicap of political and factional affiliations."

The above was the main event of the year 1939-40. But much other progress was made by the Association.

A national distinction came to *Sooner Magazine* during the summer of 1939 when it received a first place award in the annual magazine contest of the American Alumni Council. It received the first place award, in competition with 244 college and university alumni units, for "the most outstanding and original features gaining and sus-

Hal Muldrow, Jr.

'28

Insurance of all Kinds
Bonds

Security National Bank Bldg.

Norman

taining alumni interest in the magazine."

Another great step forward was also made in the promotion by the Association of a program designed to sell O.U. to Oklahoma as a necessity. This program led to the formation of the present public relations department of the University and much of the credit that goes with this department can be given to Mr. Epton whose desire it was—"that every city and town in the state be made University conscious, and a closer relationship with the University be developed."

(Continued Next Month)

Dean Gittinger Speaks

his degree in medicine at this time; Dr. George H. Kimball, Dr. James R. Reed, and Dr. Fenton A. Sanger, who each received the degree of Bachelor of Science in Medicine; Dr. Coyne Campbell, Dr. C. C. Fulton, and Miss Fay Sheppard, who each received the degree of Bachelor of Arts.

Dr. Loyd Harris, '24ms, was for several years a member of the faculty, first in pharmacy, then in chemistry, and is now at Ohio State University, Columbus. Anna Mae Dearden, now Mrs. Baynes, '24ba, was assistant registrar. Other recent members of the teaching staff are: Oren Stigler, ma, Winifred Johnston (now Mrs. Perry), ba, Grace Forrester (now Mrs. Studyvin), ba, Mary Elizabeth Simpson (now Mrs. Ittner), ba, Ruth Holzapfel, ma, Goldia Cooksey, bm.piano, W. A. Meyers, ba, and Tod Downing, ba, who served for ten years on the University faculty and later made a national reputation as a writer of detective stories. We must here pay tribute to three former members of the faculty no longer living. All were able and popular teachers: John W. Hybarger, ba, who served from 1927 until his death in July, 1932; Helen Hamill, ms, who served from 1924 until her death in March, 1945, and Catherine Holman, ba, who served from 1925 until her death in January, 1947. Here also must be mentioned Scott P. Squyres, Law, who passed away three years ago. He was at one time national commander of the Veterans of Foreign Wars and also held high office in a national music fraternity. This class has provided several who have been and still are prominent in educational administration in the state. Three of these who received the degree of Bachelor of Arts with this class are Harry Simmons, Lester M. Doughty, and James R. Frazier. Two who received the degree of Bachelor of Science in Education are George Spraberry and John B. Stout. Two who received the degree of Bachelor of Arts have played an important part in the development of the junior-college system in Oklahoma—Reed Collier and Gordon Paine. Lewis Solomon, ma, is an active and important member of the faculty of the Oklahoma Baptist University.

Attention must now be given briefly to some others. Virgil Alexander, ba, and Don Schooler, ba, are active and prominent in religious circles in the state. Bruce Potter, ba, who later completed the requirements for a law degree and whose home is in Blackwell, has made an enviable reputation as a public servant. Three prominent alumni who live in Oklahoma City must be mentioned next. They not only take part in civic activities at home but give of their time and energy to the University and the Alumni Association—Coleman Hayes, '24ba, (later to receive a degree in law), Hubert Bale, '24bs, in Geology, and Walter D. Snell, '24bs, in business.

So many others of this class should be mentioned, but we can take time to name only a few: Holly Anderson, Harvey Andrus, Elizabeth Ball (now Mrs. Carr), Harold Cooksey, James R. Eagleton, Bernice English (now Mrs. Eastman),

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