

The Engineers' Day of Days

By Harry Hill, '48eng

Sooner Special

St. Patrick's Day celebration for engineers was originated by a group of students at the University of Missouri in 1903. That year a few of the Engineers cut their classes, formed a parade, and marched about the campus. For such a demonstration these students were expelled from school. By the time of the next St. Patrick's Day, the idea had spread until on March 17, 1904, the total Engineering student body cut their classes in honor of the Irish Saint.

It was not until 1905, that the celebration became much of a realization. While on a field trip a group of engineers discovered a large rock bearing a strange inscription. Returning the rock to the Archeology Department, as the story goes, it was translated as "St. Patrick was an Engineer." This, of course, was all the students needed to adopt St. Pat as their patron saint and to proclaim the celebration as an annual affair.

Prior to 1914, the year marking the beginning of St. Pat's celebration at the University of Oklahoma, there had not been a great deal of extracurricular activities in the Engineering School. In fact, the slide rule boys had the reputation of being somewhat anti-social. However, in 1914, Mr. Harold B. Bozzell, an instructor in engineering, and Mr. A. W. McCoy, an instructor in geology, persuaded the students to form the organization known as the Guards of St. Pat and to hold a celebration on March 17 of that year. The plans for that first celebration were facilitated by Mr. McCoy, who had been dubbed a Guard of St. Pat upon his graduation from the University of Missouri. The activities that year consisted of an openhouse the afternoon of March 17, and the banquet with knighting ceremonies that night. The celebration was such a success that it was decided to continue the event annually.

The next year, 1915, saw the origination of the "Green Sheet" in conjunction with the annual affair. The University Press consented to publish a special St. Pat's edition of the *University Oklahoman* now known as the *Oklahoma Daily*. The Greensheet has continued throughout the years until at the present time there are five issues published, Tuesday through Saturday, during the week of the Engineers' celebration.

The year 1915, was destined to be a history making year, and the events of that year did more to perpetuate the annual party than any other. On the night of March 16, 1915, a group of engineers decided to remove the old Civil War cannon from Edward's Park adjacent to the present Santa Fe depot, and bring it to the campus. That year the cannon was used merely as a side attraction at the openhouse.

The students who had tugged and pushed the cannon from the park formed a Cannon Committee. Their purpose was to see that the gun, renamed Old Trusty, would be fired each year at 6:00 a.m. of March 17, in honor of St. Pat and to begin the year's festivities. The gun was first fired on the morning of March 17, 1916. However, prior to the firing that year, a group of lawyers were determined to steal the cannon in order that the engineers could not fulfill their promise to fire the



Shades of Shamrock green! It's St. Pat. A group of Tulsa engineers were puzzled recently when they entered Dean W. H. Carson's office and met this strange statue face to face. He stands atop a filing cabinet in the dean's office all year, but has one gay fling when he goes to the ceremony in which the engineers' queen dubs the Knights of St. Pat.

gun on St. Pat's Day. This was the beginning of the lawyer-engineer feud which was carried on for many years, and which was to result in queen-kidnappings, fights, and even in 1919 to the "spiking" of coffee served at the banquet.

The attempt in 1916 to steal the gun resulted in retaliation. On the morning of March 17, the disgruntled engineers loaded 'er up with powder, pointed 'er at the Law Barn, and lit the fuse. The results were amazing. After the gun smoke had cleared, these boys found it necessary to pay for the broken windows in the Engineering Building and for the four broken windows in the Law Building.

For several years thereafter there were attempts by the lawyers to stop the activities in whole or in part.

It was also in the year 1916, that the first Engineers' Dance was held. Throughout that school year a series of dances was sponsored in order to

raise funds for the St. Pat Dance. It was not customary, however, to have the dance on the day preceding the banquet as is done at the present.

By 1919, several schools had installed their own series of activities and those at the University of Missouri evolved a plan of nationalizing the annual affair. A convention was called at Columbia, Missouri, for December 5 and 6, 1919, in order to arouse interest in a national organization of the Guard of St. Pat. Two years later on February 12, 1921, the convention was held at Ames, Iowa. At that convention some objection was brought forth to the effect that since Saint Patrick was the saint of one of the churches, it would be well to name the organization the Association of Collegiate Engineers and to honor the graduating senior engineers by making them "Knights of St. Pat."

During this period at O.U., many history making events had taken place. Each year the lawyer-engineer feud seemed to increase in intensity, until it was necessary in 1920, to form the organization known as the "Loyal Knights of Old Trusty." The Cannon Committee of earlier years could not effectively maintain their purpose due to a lack of organization. Therefore, the group formed the Order of LKOT to assure the continuance of the tradition already established. It was to be a secret organization with its membership unknown. Also in 1920, the first Engineers' Queen was elected as such.

The celebration thereafter began growing by leaps and bounds. By 1923, the affair had grown to the use of fireworks which were set off on Boyd Field at midnight of March 16. The next year found the engineers spending \$50.00 on fireworks and \$100.00 on explosives. In 1925, the first engineers' show was presented in the Engineering Auditorium during the afternoon of the openhouse. The outgrowth of this was to be the show now presented as the first part of the St. Pat's celebration.

By 1926, the lawyers had evolved the idea of kidnapping the Engineers' queen. This idea was no doubt precipitated by the fact that as the lawyers approached their beloved barn on the morning of March 17, they were greeted by green owls. The retaliation consisted of the first kidnapping of an Engineers' queen. However, the queen was found and taken to the steps of the Law Building for coronation.

The Engineers' St. Pat's celebration continued to grow with such proportions in the ensuing years that by 1938, it was decided to separate the celebration and the Openhouse. It was this year that the coronation was made a part of the Engineers' Dance. That policy still stands today.

The present day celebration is a three-day affair beginning on the Thursday nearest St. Patrick's Day. It is composed of an Engineers' Show presented on Thursday night, the dance and coronation on Friday night, and the activities close with the banquet and knighting ceremony on Saturday evening.

True to tradition, the strains of Old Trusty can still be heard on St. Patrick's Day, as it ushers in the day on which the Engineers' Patron Saint drove the snakes from Ireland.