

Beginning a series of articles on outstanding O.U. Professors

Bloodshed with Literary Implications

By John Wagoner, '51

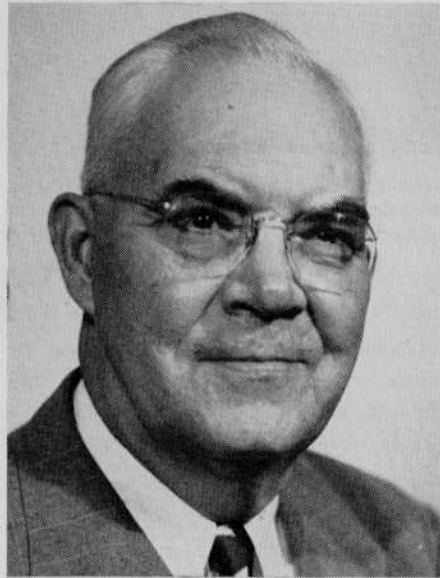
If you met Dr. Joseph Marshburn, you would probably tag him as a doctor, lawyer, minister, or even a college professor. What you wouldn't detect at first is that the soft-spoken man with the manners of a southern gentleman is up to his neck in murder.

Dr. Marshburn's murders are not the garden variety which private detectives wallow in on Sunday night radio programs. Every lethal incident recorded in his record has a special qualification: literary importance.

Murder first piqued his interest when he did his doctor's thesis at Cornell on Elizabethan pamphlet literature. Many of the pamphlets he studied reported murders for an English public which had no newspapers. Fascinated by the literary ramifications which sprang from the blood-spattered English court records, he continued probing into the subject. A trip to England in 1948 enabled him to dig through original court documents and pamphlets, resulting in a book-length manuscript, *Murder Will Speak*, which is ready for the press.

Despite the gorey subject of Dr. Marshburn's study, he retains the mien of an English professor as he explains the literary importance of bloodshed in Elizabethan England. After the murder met his just reward at the hands of her majesty's government, a pamphlet would often appear, reporting the case and trial. Then came ballads which reported the crime in rhyme. And if the murder provided good enough material, it later became a dramatic production. Dr. Marshburn has traced numerous murders through the British Public Records Office and has located pamphlets, ballads and plays concerning them. Through his work the University Library has built up one of the most complete microfilm collections of Elizabethan pamphlets in the nation.

Although his unusual study of bloodshed is an interesting facet of Dr. Marshburn's work, it is not the most important. In 1949 he was named David Ross Boyd Professor of English, and perhaps a quote from the qualifications outlined as neces-



DR. JOSEPH MARSHBURN
... Slight Case of Murder

sary for the appointment best explains what his major work has been:

"To qualify for a David Ross Boyd Professorship, a faculty member must have demonstrated over a period of years his vigorous performance and leadership in the teaching, counseling and guidance of students."

Dr. Marshburn smiles when he tells how he was "converted to the study of literature." Dr. S. M. Salyer, now a member of the O.U. English department faculty, did the converting. Marshburn had won numerous oratorical contests while he was a highschool student in Georgia, and his school superintendent told him he should study law. So when he entered the University of Georgia, he was on the way to become a lawyer. Then Salyer encountered him in an English course and brought about the conversion from law to literature.

After receiving two degrees from the University of Georgia, he went to Harvard for advanced study. There he met another graduate student who approached him with the remark:

"You talk like you are from the South."

"Yes, I am from Georgia," Marshburn replied.

"I'm from Tennessee, but at present I am teaching at the University of Oklahoma," the stranger told Marshburn.

The stranger introduced himself as T. H. Brewer and in short time invited Marshburn to join the O.U. English faculty. Marshburn declined the invitation because he was then serving as president of Georgia Military College. After two subsequent invitations to join the Oklahoma faculty were extended to Marshburn, he came to the University in 1920 as assistant professor of English. During the 30 years he has served on the faculty, the English department has become one of the strongest in the nation. He has added a sturdy block to its structure as a specialist in the English novel and English drama.

The conversion which Dr. Salyer made when he encountered Marshburn in that University of Georgia English class must have been a willing change on the student's part. A warm tone accents Dr. Marshburn's voice as he describes the visit he made to England in 1948; it was his first trip to the place of origin of the literature to which he has devoted his life's work.

"I saw Oliver's screen production of *Hamlet* in London and enjoyed it immensely because of the proximity to the place where Shakespeare lived and worked," Marshburn recalls. His itinerary took him to various literary landmarks in England, to the outstanding libraries and museums, and most important of all, to the British Public Records Office in London where he examined the court records which gave details of the murders he was studying.

While he was in London, he was invited for tea at Lambeth Palace, home of the Archbishop of Canterbury and his wife, Mrs. Fisher.

"Upon arriving, we were ushered in the great entrance gates, then to the front door of the palace, where a butler met us and we left our coats on the ground floor, corresponding to our first floor in the U. S. We ascended the wide staircase to the first floor, where we were invited into the din-

ing room by Mrs. Fisher and enjoyed a very delightful tea. After the meal, Mrs. Fisher suggested that we might enjoy a tour of the entire palace, ending with a trip to the cupola, for the wonderful vista which it affords of the Thames and the city. Being by this time no stranger to the English climate, I said that perhaps I should go down to the ground floor and don my top-coat before the long climb to the palace roof, to which Mrs. Fisher replied: 'Never mind; the Archbishop has a coat in the closet nearby, and you may wear it.' So I revelled in the magnificent view of the Thames and St. Paul's from the roof of Lambeth Palace, wearing a coat belonging to the Archbishop of Canterbury."

His study of English literature has drawn Dr. Marshburn into numerous projects, but one he recalls as being among the most interesting was the year (1934) which he spent on sabbatical leave as a reader in the Folger Shakespeare Library. "The collection is so outstanding that even the English have to come to America to do their research on original Shakespeare documents," he points out.

Marshburn isn't the sort of academic scholar who hides his spark of genius under a molding sheaf of yellowing pages. His articles appear in the learned journals, and the oratorical ability which almost made him a member of the bar often places him on the speaker's stand at public meetings.

Dr. Marshburn is indirectly responsible for the University Library's Adams Collection of 3,000 volumes composed largely of seventeenth century books especially rich in English dramatic literature. He did his PhD dissertation under Joseph Adams at Cornell. When Adams was appointed director of the Folger Shakespeare Library, he told Marshburn that he was going to dispose of his book collection. Marshburn immediately wired the late Dr. Bizzell, then president of the University, telling him that the collection was available. "Are you interested?" Marshburn asked via telegram. Dr. Bizzell made his reply in person. After receiving the telegram he had boarded a train for Cornell to purchase the collection for the University.

Georgia-born and reared, Dr. Marshburn has completely identified himself with Oklahoma in the last three decades. "I think living in a state for a period of 30 years allows one to call it his home."

When the Marshburns' only child, Joseph, Jr., was ready for college, his parents suggested that he enrol at the University of Georgia where his father began his college career. Young Joe rebelled: "You are from Georgia, but I am an Oklahoman." He enrolled in the O.U. School of

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John Barbour Dies

Death came October 5 to 76-year-old John Barbour, '97pharm, quiet spoken, gentle-mannered Norman druggist. His great support of Oklahoma football teams in the quarter century from 1897 through the early 1920's was totally unknown to the 1950 student body that so enthusiastically follows Bud Wilkinson's Sooners today.

A glance into Barbour's drug store on Norman's Main Street was like a look into the misty past. A pharmacy grad in '97, he founded the store more than 50 years ago, and it changed very little through the years.

Before a business district grew up around the campus Barbour's was a popular student hangout. There the long-haired college boys and the long-skirted college girls of '03 gathered to buy books or sit around in John's new wire-legged chairs and sip the ice cream sodas he concocted from the tomblike marble fountain while they listened to the popular airs of the day on the Edison phonograph kept for their enjoyment.

It was at Barbour's in 1903 that Tom Tribbey, '02, tackle and manager of Coach Mark McMahon's Oklahoma football team that year, called to borrow the \$300 necessary to transport the Oklahoma football team by rail to the Arkansas game in Fayetteville. Barbour willingly lent the sum but when the game, a nightmare of holding and slugging, was over, and for some reason that has been lost to posterity the host school refused to surrender the guarantee, Barbour good-humoredly waited three years before he was repaid by the poverty-stricken Oklahoma Athletic Association.

It was Barbour who was with Bennie Owen, Sooner coach 1905-1926, when an artery in Owen's arm was severed by an accidental shotgun discharge during a quail-hunt in the Chickasaw Nation south of Norman in 1907. Barbour probably saved the coach's life that day, fashioned a handkerchief tourniquet to stop the flow of blood and driving his horse-drawn phaeton several miles at a gallop to rush Owen to a surgeon who amputated the arm.

Barbour often traveled with early-day Oklahoma teams. In 1910, when the Oklahoma squad went by rail to Joplin, Mo., to meet Missouri, Center Cleve Thompson suffered from a bad carbuncle on his elbow.

It was Barbour who devised a way to reduce the swelling. Every time the train stopped to disembark passengers, Barbour went to the engineer and borrowed hot water with which to bathe the carbuncle. Thompson, only center the 1910 team had, played a terrific game but Oklahoma was licked anyhow 26-0.

There was no radio nor television in those days but Barbour always brought Oklahoma's road games to the stay-at-home students anyhow. He made arrangements with Western Union to furnish a telegraphed play-by-play account to be read by megaphone from Dr. Hirschfeld's upstairs office over the drug store to the student throngs on the street below.

Once when Owen's all-victorious Sooners of 1915 were scourging Missouri at Columbia, a violent rain storm set in midway of Barbour's broadcast, flooding the streets, stalling the jitney taxis and chasing the crowd indoors. But more than 100 students loyally stayed in the middle of the downpour, cheering the returns from Columbia where paradoxically the game was being played on a sunny field.

After 1920, the students began to patronize nearer campus stores. But Barbour's was still the hangout for oldtime players and fans who came back at Homecoming. C. E. McBride, sports edi-

tor of the Kansas City Star, always visited at Barbour's when he came to officiate Oklahoma games. And usually Sabe Hott, '14bs, the Sooners' 157-pound "thinking" tackle of 1911, would meet McBride's train and carry the sports editor's valise to Barbour's store where Sooner old-timers would gather for a gabfest.

In 1931 the University publicly recognized Barbour's friendship by presenting him an honorary "O" sweater.

Top Posts for Harris

Kenneth Harris, '39ba, senior public relations assistant at the University, has been named to three important positions in the local, state and national Junior Chamber of Commerce.

Following a recent meeting of the board of directors of the U. S. Junior Chamber of Commerce in Tulsa, Harris was appointed as national chairman of the USJCC publicity committee. He made a speech at the USJCC in Chicago in June on Jaycee use of radio, and has since completed a 25-page manual entitled *Getting on The Air*.

Harris also has been appointed editor of the *Sooner Jaycee*, official publication of the state organization. He has served as editor of the state paper on previous occasions.

Recently he was named state director of the Norman Junior Chamber of Commerce, and will represent that organization on the board of directors of the state group.

Harris has served on the board of directors of both the Oklahoma City and Tulsa Junior Chamber of Commerce, and has been editor of the *Tulsa Derrick* and Oklahoma City's *Jaycee Builder*, which he started and named.

He has been state publicity and public relations director for the Oklahoma organization since 1944.

Rossman Authors Article

Parker Rossman, '41ba, is the author of an article, "Three Dimensions of Ecumenical Work," in the September issue of *The Christian Evangelist*, published by the Disciples of Christ.

Rossman was recently appointed executive director of Student Work for the organization. As director he will guide the national student program of the Disciples of Christ.

After receiving his BA degree at O.U., Rossman continued with a BD degree from the Disciples Divinity House in Chicago. He has completed all requirements for a Ph.D. from Yale University.

Dr. Gettys Succumbs

Dr. P. L. Gettys, '19ba, '27ma, former head of the law department of Texas A.&M. College, died March 16 at the Veteran's Hospital in Waco, Texas.

Dr. Gettys received both BA and MA degrees from the University and was at one time a member of the O.U. government department faculty. He received his Ph.D. degree from Stanford University.

After his admittance to the Texas Bar, he practiced law for a time, then was elected county attorney of Wise County. When the law department was created at A.&M. College, he was made head, and he filled the position until two years before his death.

He was the author of numerous magazine articles and textbooks.

Marshburn . . .

Journalism and received a BA degree in 1941.

"We were glad that Joe decided to go to O.U. because Mrs. Marshburn and I now feel that we *are* Oklahomans."

When Dr. Marshburn starts talking about murder, you immediately feel that he isn't going to give up his probing of blood-spattered records when *Murder Will Speak* is published. But his research will be limited to after hours and vacation periods. While the University is in session, he is in the classroom demonstrating "*his vigorous performance and leadership in the teaching, counseling and guidance of students.*"

McBride . . .

health, some education, fair personality, and other such assets has no limit to his attainment. If his goal be material, let's help him make his ship come in. If it be cultural in the arts and sciences, let us compliment and encourage. We should not hold a hammer over any man's head that if he meets success after hard study, risk and labor that someone should have the proceeds on the "soak-em" basis.

Please, let us keep the fine American tradition that a man is worth to society in proportion to what he gets out of it and no man gets any more from society than in proportion to what he puts back into it.

Joe McBride, '28bus, author of the above editorial, came to the University as a student over twenty-five years ago. He arrived on the campus with \$1.15 in the pockets of his trousers which did not match his coat, several pairs of extra sox, and a lot of ambition. Today he is serving as president of the University Board of Regents.

The editorial won first place in the August editorial-column writing contest of the Oklahoma Press Association sponsored by the Oklahoma Natural Gas Co.

McBride is publisher of the *Anadarko Daily News* and partner in the Nance-McBride newspapers.

For Outstanding Service

C. W. Wantland, '10ba, was honored October 27 in Edmond by former athletes of Central State Teacher's College. An outstanding athlete, Wantland served as coach at Central State from 1912-1930.

Four presidents who headed the college during Wantland's coaching years and former students from 17 states were present for the event, which was named "Wantland Day" in his honor.

Tinker Classes Scheduled

Servicemen stationed at Tinker airforce base, Oklahoma City, are having an opportunity to start and continue work on college degrees.

Plans are nearing completion for University faculty members to conduct college classes for personnel at the base.

The men will be enrolled as regular University students and will receive full residence credit toward degrees from classes which will be held at night.

John F. Malone, '37ba, educational specialist who directs the Oklahoma City adult study center, is supervising the Tinker program.

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