

# SOONER MAGAZINE

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## The Cover

A young man with a quizzical look perched atop a calendar for 1951 seems to be asking, "What does the future hold?" And many alumni are asking the same question as that posed by cover boy Randall Guy Brown. He's the son of Guy Brown, '42ba, '48ma, and Mrs. Betty Brown, Norman.

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## On the Sooner Scene

# Oklahoma: Youth's University

By G. B. Parker, '08ba

I think sometimes that Oklahomans do not realize the peculiar individuality of their own state. They are too much engrossed in its distracting details. A man must get away from his office now and then to get a clear sight of his business. Or he may lose the sense of his wife's romantic attractions, not because his wife has changed but because he sees her every day and takes those attractions as a matter of course. What he needs is perspective, and some sort of misty, glamorous drop-curtain that will soften the outlines of the commonplace into the seductiveness of the unfamiliar.

I think I have that perspective on Oklahoma; and perhaps time and distance, and Oklahoma itself, have furnished the drop-curtain too.

Oklahoma is different from other commonwealths. Most other states can be summed up in one word; Texas, big; Kansas, farms; Colorado, Rockies; Iowa, corn; California, climate; Vermont, Coolidge; Massachusetts, history—and so on. But Oklahoma cannot be caught in one word. Not even the word oil. To an outsider this might seem the key word. To an Oklahoman it is maddeningly inadequate.

Of all expressions of the state's entity I like John Cowper Powys' best: "In Oklahoma anything might happen."

Literally anything. From poor farmer to millionaire overnight, of course. From riches to rags sometimes, yes. But other and even stranger things than those are going on all the time in Oklahoma.

It is highly improbable that the best of

scientific wizards would ever find oil under the rockless prairies of Oklahoma City. Yet a young undergraduate figured that out, and another wild dream came true. It is likewise improbable that of all the limber pens in the country the one that writes the purest poetry should come from this young state. That happened too. If any American landed a play with the Theatre Guild in New York he would be no less than Eugene O'Neill, or by some rare chance he might be the graduate of a great Eastern center of culture. But no, it was Lynn Riggs ('23) of Oklahoma, and not only one play but two for the same season.

It is improbable too that so young a commonwealth should find time for art. But one of Oscar Jacobson's students. Olinka Hrdy ('28fa), has surpassed her fellow modernists in putting across ideas, at the same time obeying and using the laws of rhythm and harmony. Others—Indians—of his group, have put their own people into permanent records, and in their pictures have created a source-book for designers and students of design for years to come.

Other high improbabilities that turned out to be true were that Everett DeGolyer ('11ba) should find the biggest oil well in the world the first time he pricked the breast of mother earth, and that he should continue in the advance of his profession by founding a school of research which aims to revolutionize the methods of locating oil and other minerals.

That a nationally known writer on the affairs of mothers and wives should be a

Continued page 28

## Youth's University . . .

successful mother and wife to begin with—Mrs. Walter Ferguson ('07) is turning that little trick. It was not to be expected that George Milburn ('31), while still an undergraduate by describing what he saw about him in clear, close-fitting words, should have earned for himself a literary prestige that commands the respect of students of writing from New York to California. Nor that in the methods of handling books, in library management, Oklahoma should have furnished two of the leading American librarians, Carl Milam ('07ba), and Jay Ferguson ('01ba, '06ma). Nor that ideas in the matter of collection and dissemination of books, and the cultivation of a widespread use and love of books should be further advanced in our beautiful new library than in any similar place in the country.

You have noted that all those tricks of magic have been turned by alumni of the University of Oklahoma. And why not?

Truly in Oklahoma anything may happen.

The reason as I see it is youth. Oklahoma is not bound by tradition. This is a new world, a new epoch. Traditions, conventional usages, are for those times when the world and its people are moving along in the same old way. They are not doing that now. Every tradition, every convention, is being challenged. What does it mean? What is it worth? If the answer is nothing, then we want to hear no more about it. It is the group that can step out, free of the doubts, hesitations and inhibitions of the past, which will shape the future. Traditions are like barnacles. They cut down speed.

For instance, the state of New York retains certain ideas in education that have been long outmoded in more progressive states. There is still the state-wide "Regents" examination for every high school subject. Educators everywhere speak of such an examination with impatience and amusement. New York has always had it, so she keeps it. For New York has age, and custom, and that "it's always-been-done" handicap. One school in the community I live in is trying to adopt some of the ideas of the new pedagogy which emanate from the middle west. The whole village is lined up, for or against. Those who want to experiment in the hope of finding something better, and those who are afraid to experiment, are all very emotional and intense about it, and no one knows yet what the outcome will be. For another instance, New York City only this summer adopted a system of "staggering" its traffic lights. The idea of "staggering" signals so that cars could make fewer stops and

so move more swiftly has been used in middle western cities for years. It just "hadn't been done" in New York, where the barnacles of convention have had more time to grow.

Progress comes hard where there is too much tradition.

In Oklahoma, thank goodness, anything may still happen.

Oklahoma has a little bit of an inferiority complex. It is one of its most valuable assets. An inferiority complex is not always a pathological condition. For a young man, and for a young woman too, a little of it is not only a charming quality, it is a great stimulus. It is a stimulus to Oklahomans. Subconsciously the typical Oklahoman says to himself, "Here am I in this new state, with very little cultural background. I shall have to compete all my life with those who have been surrounded by greater advantages, with historical significance, with long-conceded political importance, and so on and so on. To make any show in comparison I shall have to exert myself more. I shall have to try harder and aim higher in order to reach the same end."

They do try harder. And the extra effort turns the trick. For, after all, the difference between success and failure is covered by that five or ten per cent of extra application.

This inferiority complex will be outgrown sometime. When it is, Oklahomans will have lost an asset and acquired a liability.

Today, it is a wholesome thing. It is a

spur. The results, all things considered, are surprisingly good.

Anyone can count the advantages to a young student of his selecting the college where he will meet his future business associates. Any more recent alumnus of Oklahoma can point out ten to my one of conspicuous successes among its graduates.

But it takes perspective of one kind or another to realize the peculiar virtues of Oklahoma's position among the states and their colleges—the stimulus and extra fillip to the ambition which results from the fresher point of view, unhampered by the smugness that grows from custom and from age. In short, Oklahoma has youth, and youth not only will be served, but will serve. The only trouble with "Old Harvard" and "Old Yale" is the word "old."

In the line of my own work many names occur—names of those who, having absorbed the inspiration that comes from an environment uncluttered with tradition, went out into the world with something to contribute that wasn't possessed by graduates from older schools.

I think of Morrison Toomer ('14ba), one of the finest journalistic minds I have ever known; rare combination of editorial force coupled with gentleness. Newspapering lost deeply when he died young. And of other editors in my particular concern—E. A. Evans ('12), Edwin Minter ('12ba), Wallace Perry ('07ba). Writers like Earl Sparling, whose stories about New Orleans and New York rank not merely as re-

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porting, but as literature. There's frequently a difference. And Walter Morrow ('17, deceased) of *The Cleveland Press*.

Charles E. Marsh ('08ba). He came to Oklahoma from the east. I think he believed what Horace Greeley said about going west, young man. Anyway, in this day of "chains" he is the chief owner of one of the most virile group newspaper operations in these United States. Texas, quite some state, hasn't been able to hold him, and recently he has been stepping forth into New Jersey and all points east. Scripps-Howard lost a lot of talent when Charley, who was one of our editors, decided to go into newspaper publishing for himself.

Then we have those who departed from the strait and narrow path of editorial work—Walter Ferguson, for example. Before Will Rogers was ever heard of, Walter was getting the "same reader-reactions" that Will now gets from the same sort of salty comment on news and affairs, on the great and the near-great. Walter went into the banking business, and that was journalism's loss.

Seward Sheldon ('15ba) played the same sort of trick when oil lured him into the marts of trade and finance.

In the business side of newspaper work we have Ray Haun ('12ba), advertising manager of the *Ladies Home Journal*, one of the important executives of the Curtis Publications; Ralph B. (Inky) Campbell ('06ba, deceased), of the Batten, Barten, Durstine and Osborne organization, which ranks among the first few of the great advertising agencies; Charles E. (Chuck) Newell ('07), an editor who decided to go into the business end and who proved that such a move could succeed, despite a strong tradition to the contrary.

Further, I may cite publishers like Wesley Nunn, ('17); geologists like Frank Buttram ('10ba, '12ma), Ben Belt ('10ba), and Edgar Hyde ('15ba), actors like Ernest Sharpe ('27ba); scientists like Chester Reeds ('05bs); poets like Jack McClure ('15ba), and Muna Lee ('14).

If I should go through the alumni directory I could print names until your eyes were tired, of graduates who went to success from that university, carrying with them the inspiration of institutional youth.

And the only thing that worries me today about my alma mater—a quarter of a century after I matriculated—is that a little too much ivy is growing on those college walls.

George B. Parker wrote the article printed above for the *University of Oklahoma Bulletin* in 1930. Two decades have brought many changes and "Deke" Parker is dead. He died in October of 1949.

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Yet the obvious truism that what he wrote 20 years ago is as good today as it was yesterday holds firm.

Few Oklahomans in our era have wielded such a tremendous national influence as Parker. He was editor of the largest chain of newspapers in America, the Scripps-Howard chain, for many years.

The secret of "Deke" Parker's success was hard, intelligent work. His first job paid him fifty cents a day, carrying water for a gang hoeing beets on a farm in Michigan. He decided to go west for his education and enrolled in the University of Oklahoma when it was yet a small school with two buildings on its campus.

From that small start of fifty cents a day carrying water, his achievements rank among the finest in the annals of American journalism. After tiring of work in a tax office, he applied for a position on the *Daily Oklahoman* at Oklahoma City. He wasn't accepted. Undiscouraged, he applied next to the *Oklaoma News* and began work at ten dollars a week. From that beginning in the Scripps-Howard chain, he worked his way up to the position of editorial overseer of the entire network of newspapers.

When Parker died, editors everywhere searched for the right words to summarize his life. Perhaps the Washington, D. C. *Evening Star* came as close to finding the right phrases as anyone. The paper said: "American journalism is the better for having felt the influence of George B. Parker."

### Rogers' Murals . . .

back the scholarships when they become established in jobs.

The University of Texas and the University of California also share in the handicapped scholarship fund which amounts to \$150,000, consisting of contributions by Will Rogers' friends.

Friends of Will Rogers also are responsible for another campus program. They have contributed items to the University archives which is building a Will Rogers collection.

Important items in the collection so far are letters written by Will and Mrs. Rogers, newspaper clippings and scrapbooks.

Reliable sources indicate that Rogers was not a very good student and devoted much of his scholarly career to roping fellow students and teachers. But he left ripples of laughter in the sands of time and for that reason the University has thrown a rope around his memory and memorialized him for posterity.

## As a Service to Former Students: Job Opportunities

(As a service to alumni, the *Sooner Magazine* is offering a list of job openings. The positions have been reported to the *Sooner* by University deans and department chairmen through the co-operation and direction of Frank A. Ives, director of the University Employment Service. Because of deadline problems, some of the jobs may have been filled by the time this magazine is in alumni hands.)

A large midwestern glass manufacturer has openings in the insulation division of the firm as follows:

(1) Project engineer with experience in quality control or combustion control in hot glass, hot metal or similar industry. Background in physics with training in metallurgy, heat and power machine design.

(2) Sales representative with engineering background in building materials and insulation fields.

(3) Sales manager with experience in the insulation business, and a knowledge of the technique of the building industry. Salary—\$8,000 to \$11,000—plus bonus.

(4) Industrial sales manager. Background in chemical engineering or an allied field that would indicate a knowledge of heat transfer in materials of all types.

(5) Project engineer with emphasis on oil refinery or chemical plant construction work. Must be willing to travel.

(6) A steel company has openings in St. Louis for mechanical engineers with rolling mill experience; electrical engineers with rolling mill or electrolytic tinning process experience and structural engineers with experience in re-enforced steel and concrete for design and detail work.

(7) An Arkansas oil company is in need of experienced petroleum engineers with specialization work in well completions.

(8) A major rubber company has a number of openings for experienced mechanical engineers, chemical engineers and chemists in the following fields:

Organic Research, Tire design, tire compound development, mechanical goods compound development, fuel tank development, rubberized fabric product development, construction engineers, plant design and machine design.

Any inquiries concerning the positions listed above should be sent to the *Sooner Magazine* and must carry the number associated with each position. They will be submitted to the department or college holding the request. Sample Address: Sooner Magazine, Classified section 1, University of Oklahoma.

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