

observed in the College of Engineering since his arrival in 1917 are in equipment for training and the shift of emphasis from electrical power training to electronics.

"The University catalog said our laboratories were admirably equipped," Tappan recalls. "Perhaps they were for their time, but they certainly were far short of present standards." The change from electrical power training to electronics was due largely to the development of radio and other electronic devices.

In 1920 he was promoted to the rank of professor of electrical engineering and became director of the School of Electrical Engineering. He held that position until 1947 when he became David Ross Boyd Professor and was retired from the directorship.

He served one year (1935-36) as acting dean of the College of Engineering, and has filled numerous committee positions within the college.

Extending his activities outside the college, he served as director of the annual Oklahoma Interscholastic Meet from 1920 to 1942 and was once assistant secretary of the Oklahoma Utilities Association.

He was a member of the committee which drew up the engineer licensing law for the Oklahoma state legislature, and he holds Registered Engineer Certificate Number 15 in the state. "We who served on the committee were issued the first certificates," Tappan recalls. He also helped erect another milestone in Oklahoma engineering by serving on the committee which wrote the constitution and by-laws for the Oklahoma Society for Professional Engineers.

Tappan's interest in languages is one of the most interesting facets of his life. He knew Dr. Roy Temple House, who is now editor emeritus of *Books Abroad*, O.U. international literary quarterly, when he and House were both at Miami University. When Dr. House founded *Books Abroad* on the University campus, he utilized Tappan's knowledge of languages by having him review foreign language books for the quarterly. He also reviews French and German books for *Electrical World*, a publication for electrical engineers. "I guess I have reviewed around a hundred books," Tappan estimates.

It was his interest in languages coupled with his knowledge of science that enabled him to work out his answer to the flying saucers. When the flying discs were reported to be almost filling the sky, he put his solution to the puzzle in a letter to Fred Tarman, '10ba, editor of the *Norman Transcript*:

"You know the old Romans twenty-five hundred years ago had a name for them (flying saucers). They called them Muscae

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A Modest Artist

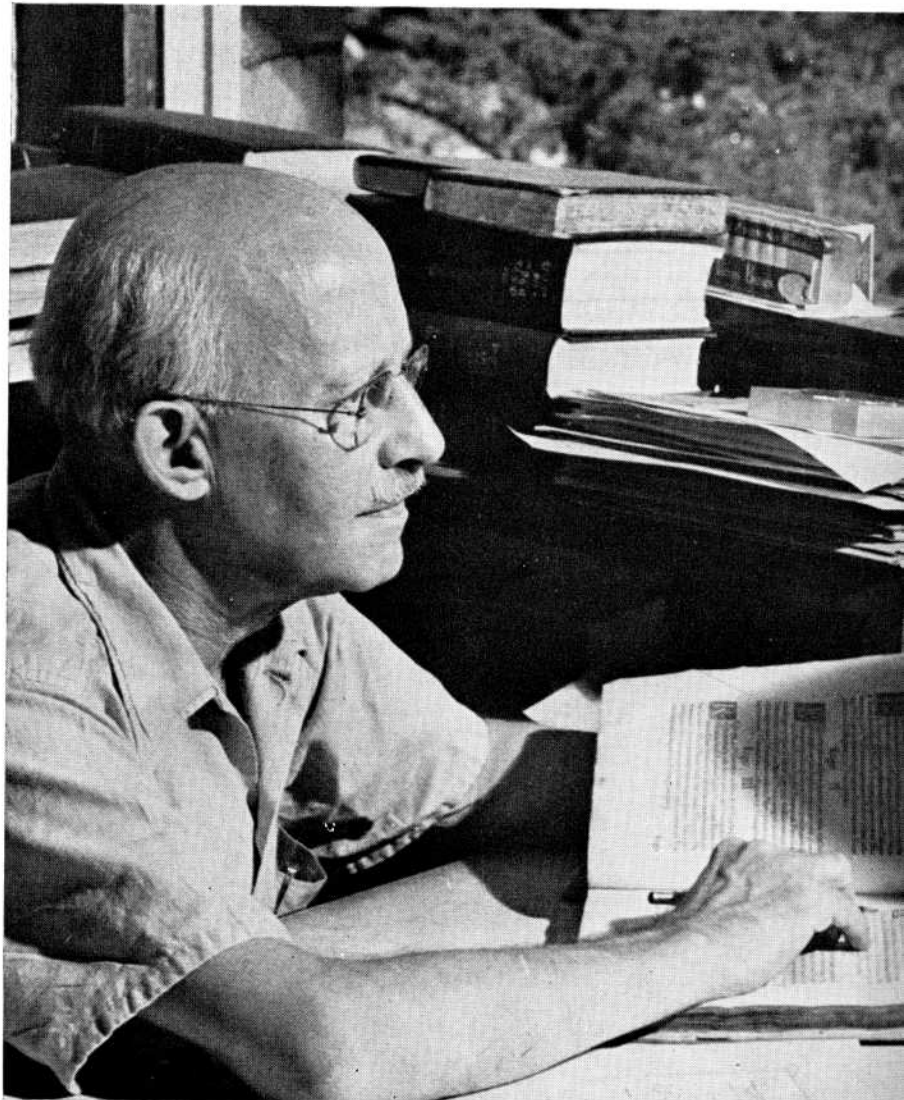
Will Ransom, "the dean of book producers," has seen books he designed listed among the 50 best designed books of the year from 1945-1949. A musician, lecturer, writer, artist and scholar, Ransom considers his job as that of the supporting actor.

By Dr. Roy Temple House

One of the most remarkable of all the publications of the University of Oklahoma Press was Albert Johannson's two-volume reference work called *House of Beadle and Adams, and Its Dime and Nickel Novels*, an encyclopedia of the publications of a famous book house during the roaring

"dime novel" period of the second half of the nineteenth century.

Published in May of the last year, the most amusing of encyclopedias and most scholarly of all works on the Wild West novel, was received by the book reviewer with enthusiasm amounting to excitement.



Will Ransom, University Press book designer, examines a sample of the printer's art in his office in the Press Building. Known as the dean of book producers, he is the leading American authority on private presses in this country and England.

The *Chicago Tribune* called it "a magnificent publishing achievement" and one which "holds endless hours of delight." The *New York Times* qualified it as "a superb piece of Americana," and added "No man with gray hair can arise from a reading of it without a feeling of warming melancholy for his lost youth and the simple, artless America that he knew." And what is more immediately to our present point, the *Saturday Review of Literature* declared that "The University of Oklahoma Press's admirable investiture reflects the spirit of the text delightfully and effectively. Excellent teamwork has gone into the compiling and fashioning of the two volumes."

The *Saturday Review's* tribute to the "excellent teamwork" of our Press was well deserved. The capable and energetic Director of the University of Oklahoma Press has assembled a staff of editors, artists, and craftsmen who work hard and collaborate well and who put out as good a product as any publisher in the country. But the workmanlike appearance of their books is due chiefly to the talent and amazing industry of one extraordinary person, a scarce-haired and placid-appearing smallish man who is at least twenty-five years older than he looks and who answers to the name of Will Ransom.

This Will Ransom is spoken of and written of as "the dean of book producers" in this country. This use of the word "dean" has never been quite clear to the present writer. A dean in a college is usually elderly, he is not only a master of his specialty but is gifted at organization and the direction of others, and he is supposed to be, as we used to say in Latin before we all forgot our Latin, "primus inter pares," that is to say one of a group of equals but perhaps just a little bit better than most of the rest of them. If this makes a dean, Will Ransom fits the description. For five consecutive years, 1945 to 1949, books designed by him and published by the Press were listed by the American Institute of Graphic Arts among the "Fifty Best Books" of each year, in spite of the fact that the American Institute of Graphic Arts is located in New York City and is generally inclined to elevate the eyebrow at sight of any publication which comes from Oklahoma.

Will Ransom is many other things besides a book designer of taste and judgment. He is the leading American authority on private presses in this country and England, those presses on which men like the English poet William Morris and the world-famous American type-designer Frederic Goudy printed beautiful books for the sheer love of beauty. He is an ac-

complished musician, and loves music almost as dearly as he loves graceful and legible type-faces. He is a lecturer and writer on the art and craft of printing, and he handles both the spoken and the written word with a skill which is rare in Oklahoma, or for that matter anywhere else. A genial soul, and a witty fellow, his bright phrases would be quoted like Bob Hope's if it were not that they are usually a little subtle for popular consumption.

Every worth-while artist is guided, consciously or unconsciously, by an artistic doctrine. Mr. Ransom has a lecture, delivered first at the University of Oklahoma in 1948 and since issued as a handsome booklet by Diamant in New York, titled *Printing: A Modest Art*. One of his wisest wisecracks runs to the effect that a book is not well printed if anybody pays any attention to how it is printed. He argues that the business of the book designer is to co-operate with the author and the publisher in making a book which is readable, easy to handle, and unobtrusively attractive. The book artist, he insists, can never be a star, like a painter or a heroic tenor. He is necessarily a supporting artist, nothing else. Whenever he forgets this, he fails.

This is Will Ransom's philosophy of his profession. And he practices what he preaches.

Briefs . . .

Mrs. Effie Hudson, Negro social worker, has been appointed as special instructor at the University. She is the first member of her race to achieve faculty status at O.U.

Caseworker at the Family and Children's service in Oklahoma City, Mrs. Hudson will supervise the field work of Negro students in the University School of Social Work. Her appointment was effective February 1.

As a special instructor she will direct students who spend part of their time working as volunteers in the Oklahoma City social agencies for practical experience.

Mrs. Hudson received her master's degree at Atlanta University School of Social Work and has worked in the state department of public welfare.

Leonard H. Haug, director of the University Band, has been elected divisional chairman of the College Band Directors National Association. Under his chairmanship are Oklahoma, Kansas, Missouri, Colorado, Texas, Arkansas and New Mexico.

Dr. Gaston Litton, '34Lib.sci, '40ma, University archivist, was named state president of the Oklahoma Library Association at its annual meeting in Norman March 17.

He was advanced to the office from the vice president's post in the organization.

Signs of the Times

John Thomas Taylor, Jr., '50pharm, Tulsa, is stationed with the United States Navy at the U. S. Naval Hospital, Memphis, Tennessee.

Lt. John F. Burton, Jr., '50bs, Oklahoma City, reported for active duty in the United States Army March 23 to the Second Armored Division, Fort Hood, Texas.

James A. Criswell, '38-'39, Purcell, who held the rank of major in the Army transportation corps reserve, recently volunteered for active duty in grade of captain.



Andrew J. Reynolds, '40, Director of Supply for the Western Air Defense Force, Hamilton Air Force Base, near San Francisco, has been promoted to full colonel in the U. S. Air Force.

He reported to the New York port of embarkation, Brooklyn, March 27 for overseas duty.

Lt. Col. Herber Carlton Leney, '34Law, former officer in the Judge Advocate General's office in Washington, D. C., was assigned to the Headquarters, Seventh Army, which is being reactivated at Fort Meade, Maryland.

Capt. George L. T. Hustead, '50bus, Sweetwater, has been assigned to the Japan Logistical Command with headquarters in Yokohama. Prior to his present assignment, he served in a similar capacity with Headquarters, Eighth Army. He arrived in Japan in March after duty at Fort Bragg, North Carolina.

Lt. Tom McMurray, '43-'46, Oklahoma City, was commissioned at Vance Air Force Base, Enid, early in February. Lieutenant McMurray is a pilot.

Pfc. James B. Williams, '50, Oklahoma City, recently entered the Airplane and En-