

Sooner Portraits



FRANK BUTTRAM
... Deeply Interested

Cobb Was Out

Frank Buttram, '10ba, '12ma, Oklahoma City oilman and capitalist, once struck Ty Cobb out three times in a row when the Detroit Tigers stopped at O.U. one spring on their way home from training camp. The University pitcher did something that had not been done before nor was ever done again while Cobb was in the major leagues.

The Tigers made him an offer then and there. But baseball was a game to him and not an occupation, and he decided to continue in school.

The decision was a sound one. No one could ever accomplish in baseball what Buttram has done in the business world.

This man, who was one of the first Oklahomans named to the state Hall of Fame when it was established in 1931, began life as one of the four children of an Oklahoma farmer. The family farm was in the Red River bottomlands in the Chickasaw Nation, now Love County.

His father made the 1889 run and settled near Noble, later moving to Center, and later to Pottawatomie County, near Shawnee. It was in a one-room country school in the latter region that Frank Buttram began his formal education.

Along about the age of 18, he began his start toward higher education. After a cou-

ple of months at the normal school in Edmond and a term at a teachers' institute in Tecumseh, Oklahoma, he returned to his 1-room school as a teacher. There he received his first public recognition when he was elected president of the teachers' association in Pottawatomie County.

He returned to Edmond after his stint as a teacher. He hadn't much money so he worked as a baggage handler, dishwasher and waiter.

The Edmond school gave him two years toward a BA degree. Then he came to the University and completed his undergraduate work in one year plus a month of summer school.

At the University he encountered Dr. Charles N. Gould, state geologist, and Dr. D. W. Ohern, professor of geology. Their courses caused him to decide on geology as his profession. He went to school for another two years, working for a master's degree and devoting half time to the State Geological Survey. The Survey job helped with his finances.

Work on the State Geological Survey was largely of a field nature. He wrote a bulletin on the glass sands of Oklahoma, another on the origin of volcanic dust and a third on the Cushing oil field. The latter was published in 1914.

Buttram has given the Cushing bulletin much weight in determining what has followed in his career. Petroleum geology was being used by only a few major operators at the time. His bulletin not only gave impetus to its application, but opened the way for his career in oil.

Frank Buttram came in for a stock interest when A. P. Crockett, an Oklahoma City attorney, launched an oil company. Named the Fortuna Oil Company, the enterprise had immediate and spectacular success. Buttram became No. 1 man on the field end, acting as a geologist, tool pusher and superintendent of drilling.

In 1920 Buttram was able to organize his own company, the Buttram Petroleum Corporation. His company was in the right places at the right time. His production in Central Texas reached high figures, and East Texas proved to be another big success for the company.

Mrs. Buttram is the former Merle New-

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DR. CARL MILAM
... Trees and the U. N.

A Little Embarrassed

"I'm a little embarrassed when people ask me when I was last on the campus, I know it was in the early forties but can't remember exactly when." The speaker was Dr. Carl Milam, '07ba, recently retired United Nations librarian who is now living in Barrington, Illinois. He was in Norman to deliver the principal address to the March annual meeting of the Oklahoma Library Association.

"You know when I took the U. N. job it was for only two years with the understanding that I would retire at the end of that time. (Dr. Milam was appointed Director of the United Nations Library Services at Lake Success in 1948. He retired in 1950) "So now you might say my wife (Nell Robinson Milam, '09ba) and I are resting. We are growing trees mostly for reforestation purposes but have a number of Christmas trees growing also."

A man who carries his 60-odd years and his prestige with equal dignity, Dr. Milam talked a little about the speech he was in town to deliver. "I want to try and prove that the United States is the most revolutionary country in the world."

Two hours later his point seemed well taken. Speaking to the Oklahoma Librar-

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A short time ago this little man rushed into alumni homes. He asked help toward his goal of building a Greater O.U. Do some blocking for him by sending in your contribution to the Alumni Development Fund.

Milam . . .

ians, he quoted from Johnathan Daniels' *The Man of Independence*.

"The road of revolution at mid-century still lay down the American way. No other radicals had yet proposed any such startling determinations for men on earth as those old plotters at Philadelphia in 1876 . . . The revolution remains. It has met counter-revolution before . . . The communist counter-revolution is only a more direct and brutal attempt to destroy liberties and the dignity proposed for all men so long ago. Reaction does not become radicalism because it wears red. The American Revolution is not spent. Indeed, it is still fighting its way toward fulfillment."

The man who speaks of revolutionary thought as the force that keeps the nation moving forward along intended lines was born in Harper County, Kansas, October 22, 1884. The family moved into Kay County, Oklahoma, shortly thereafter. He

entered the University of Oklahoma in 1904 as an assistant librarian. Another assistant librarian at the time was Jesse L. Rader, '08ba, '13ma, now University librarian.

He decided he liked library work and after graduation he took a position in the John Crerar Library, Chicago. A tour of training at the New York State Library School in Albany helped to further equip him for the larger jobs ahead. After he had his degree from New York he worked in the Purdue University Library.

While in Indiana he became secretary and state organizer to the Public Library Commission of that state. His work was done so well that the American Library Association called him from the post of director of the Birmingham, Alabama, public library to become director general of its library war service. This was the beginning of a long association with the American Library Association, a job he held until his United Nations appointment.

At the time of Dr. Milam's retirement from the secretaryship of the American

Library Association, a few impressions of his accomplishments was summarized in the *American Library Association Bulletin*:

"The world has moved so swiftly that the 1920 patterns of industrial development, civil rights, transportation and communication, our national responsibility in the world society, and education, seemed simple and restricted in contrast to those of the present. In a scene changing so rapidly on so many fronts, it is remarkable indeed that any leader of one generation should have the sustained imagination and the adaptable foresight to continue to point the directions for another generation confronted with vastly different problems. As Executive Secretary of the American Library Association, Carl H. Milam did this for nearly three decades of eventful years, during which the Association attained new peaks of influence and recognition.

"I hope it will not be inappropriate . . . to set down a few appraisals of Mr. Milam . . . He has the ability to see problems in large terms . . . to distinguish between the unimportant details . . . and the core of the

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problem. He is quick in detecting conflicting undercurrents . . . and is astute in appraising alignments . . . He has ability to sum up discussion, and in doing so, gives meaning to what sometimes seems like aimless and confusing talk. With these abilities and with his gift of ready clear expression, it is natural that he frequently becomes the spokesman for the group . . .

"Carl M. Milam has made a significant contribution—probably a unique contribution—to the advancement of American librarianship . . ."

Buttram . . .

by, '06bm, '12ba. She was head of the violin department at the University before their marriage. There are four sons and one daughter in the Buttram family. Myron, '36ba, and Merle, the twins are the oldest. The other three boys are Dorsey, Donald and Harold.

In 1926 Buttram was designated as Oklahoma City's "Most Useful Citizen." The choice was made by public opinion voiced in ballots cast in the annual *Daily Oklahoman* poll.

Behind that selection was a phenomenal amount of civic work on the part of Buttram. His extra-business activities included:

President of the Oklahoma City Chamber of Commerce, member of the University of Oklahoma Board of Regents for 10 years and president of the board for two years, and member of the Oklahoma Hall of Fame.

Just name a worthwhile civic activity of any scope in Oklahoma City, and you will find the Buttram name on the list of supporters. But there is more than a mere listing of name for Buttram; he works in the activities which he supports.

He sought public office once. In 1930 he made the race for governor. Since then his role in politics is that of an influential citizen who works to improve the proper functions of government.

A few years ago Elmer T. Peterson, *Daily Oklahoman* writer, commented on Buttram's activities:

"Frank Buttram is deeply interested in industrial progress, farming, art, home and civic beauty, education, religious activities and relief of suffering. He has served valiantly in all of these fields.

"A multimillionaire, he earned his way to the top by hard, grueling work and by knowing his business. Nevertheless, he shows a sense of gratitude for his good fortune and has shown that he can take it. He isn't spoiled by prosperity."

Mr. Peterson's words fit the Frank Buttram of 1951 as comfortably as an old shoe.

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