

Under Cover

By David Burr, '50

The editor takes a good look at the question, "Do alumni of the University of Oklahoma owe their alma mater anything?" He thinks they do but only in proportion to what they owe themselves. He believes they do not owe cash settlement to University.

I've often asked myself a question that many alumni ask themselves. It's a question which the editor of the *Sooner Magazine* should surely be ready to answer if he believes in the alumni, the University and his job. The question: "Do the alumni of the University of Oklahoma owe their alma mater anything?"

It is on the answer to such a question that the success of the alumni giving program (O.U. Foundation and Alumni Development Fund) hinges. In the heart of the magazine this month, some 2,000 alumni names are listed who have found a satisfactory answer for themselves. So, if you will permit me, I want to think for a bit and find the answer for myself.

First, I am sure that no graduate or former student owes the University a cash settlement for their years on the campus. The money debt was paid when the tuition was covered and living expenses handled. I'm sure that the first person that told you, as an alumnus, that you owed the University a \$100 debt for all it did for you would be in for a hard battle.

You may owe individuals at O.U. something. But again it cannot be paid in money. Many people rightfully feel that they owe a certain amount of their success to professors who gave sound advice and inspiration. But this does not add up to a debt to the University.

The University of Oklahoma is a tax-supported institution and you, as an Oklahoma taxpayer, are aiding the University program through taxes. This is enough. Or it is? Besides there are many alumni out-of-state. What about them. Do they owe an outstanding debt. They are doing nothing to support O.U. through taxation.

While I am sure no alumnus or alumna owes the University a settlement in dollars and cents, I am just as sure that the web of reason partially woven by University training opens their eyes to the fact that O. U. is and will be, like many other state universities, in need of financial help from outside the taxpayer's pocket to continue a program of improvement.

From where I sit, the awful truth is that tax money will never in the future be enough to cover the rising costs of maintaining O.U. on a footing with the best col-

leges and universities. True, enough may be forthcoming to keep the doors open for many years to come, but there will not be enough available to pay decent faculty salaries, keep the campus services and utilities functioning as they must if O.U. is to maintain a lofty academic status. In short, the administration can only provide an education for every student in direct proportion to the sum derived from tuition and state appropriations. Appropriations are not keeping pace with the higher cost of living and, consequently, the higher cost of education.

Because many alumni are aware that the important extras can only be forthcoming from outside funds, the Alumni Development Fund and the O.U. Foundation have been doing a good business. A good example of the extras is the recently established University of Oklahoma Foundation Teaching Awards program announced in *Sooner Magazine* last month. Three individuals and one organization are contributing a total of \$25,000 for an idea to promote better teaching and counselling on the undergraduate level.

Another example is the support the graduates of the School of Geology gave to a fund to equip the new Gould Geology Building when building costs necessitated the use of all available funds for construction purposes. The alumni set up the fund themselves and manned the drive to a successful conclusion.

I do not believe that any of these people felt they owed a cash settlement to the University. But they saw the need for outside help that could be gained nowhere else, and they believed in the cause of education and their University enough to give tangible support.

I do not believe that loyalty to O.U. is the reason for this support. True, it is the reason that the support was given here rather than, say, to Texas or S.M.U. But it is all a part of the growing awareness that higher education must look beyond the taxpayer for some support if colleges and universities intend to continue to provide the latest educational techniques and devices.

The fact that much of the giving comes from alumni makes good sense. And here

is where the web of the University has woven its spell. For if the University was successful in its efforts to teach a student not only how to memorize but how to think, alumni will be the first to see the need, and should be the first to help find the solution.

Probably the most appealing need of the University of Oklahoma is a broadened scholarship program. The day when an 18-year-old could come to O.U. with \$50.00 in his pocket and a \$50.00 monthly allowance and be expected to skim through has not vanished entirely, but is well on the way out. The argument that a student should be denied the right to a college education on financial grounds rather than ability has long been lopsided.

Now the argument is, "The young people need a chance." And while I naturally want to see students come to O.U., I don't think an alumnus would be off base to provide a scholarship to a student first and think of the institution second. The responsibility must first be to the student and second to the institution.

One day we may well see any 18-year-old who has college possibilities able to attend this University without a constant nightmare over money. This is a responsibility shared. It is shared by all who believe in the purpose of a college education, and by those who believe that the only way to provide something better for everyone is to provide something better for individuals who make up the group called "everyone."

I think I have found the answer to the premise, "Do the alumni of the University of Oklahoma owe their alma mater anything?" Basically, only loyalty. But because they are intelligent, human beings and because many of them are "thinkers" they owe something to themselves. And when they pay the debt to themselves, as it concerns higher education, they will automatically provide something better for the school they call their own.

Another Extra

We are again broadening the scope of *Sooner Magazine*. Thus far this year the staff has added the *Oklahoma Quarterly* to the list of dividends found within its cover. We were also able to provide an expanded issue devoted to the Union.

Now we are adding a monthly feature which will be labelled, "A Sooner Special." This month's Special is Sam Fullerton: Cattleman. As I have written in the editor's note, the feature will concern itself with material that is patently Southwestern. Because alumni, faculty or students of the University are engaged in many businesses and cultural pursuits that are basically Southwestern in scope, we feel justified in doing so.