



PONCA MILITARY ACADEMY sits on a gentle rise above the Ponca City Golf course. The three buildings serve as home and school for 110 students. Left to right they are field house, dormitory and administration and classroom building. The area directly in front of the school is athletic field.

Launched by a family tragedy, developed by hard work and faith, the Ponca Military Academy, owned and operated by the Cox family, is

The School an Idea Built

By DAVID BURR, '52ba

Two miles east of Ponca City is a school that an idea built. To be more exact, the Ponca Military Academy was built by an idea, \$1,700, an old Chevy, some furniture and a husband and wife team. Today the owner "would not take a quarter of a million" for the institution and could probably sell for near that figure.

The owner and superintendent, Col. William V. Cox, '21ba, '24ma, has made a unique place for himself in educational, alumni and business circles. His business rating is evinced by his unusual return on a meager monetary investment. His unusual record for alumni and educational affairs are tied together. He is the only O.U. alumnus to own and to operate a military academy, and his is the only academy for boys ages 7 to 17 in Oklahoma.

Spreading in a gentle semi-circle above the Ponca City Country club's golf course, the school makes a low silhouette on the sloping countryside. Done in Spanish style architecture and with Indian and Spanish interiors, the academy provides everything

a well equipped, military boarding school can offer a 110-student enrolment.

Three major buildings comprise the campus. The largest structure houses the administration, library, auditorium, kitchen, lounge and class rooms. In the center of the group is the dormitory and on the east the field house. A fourth campus building near the head of the lane that leads to the school, is the home of the Coxes. Picture windows give the family a view of the school from many directions.

It is well that the family has such a view. For the Ponca Military Academy is not simply a 1-man operation or a business venture. It is the family's life as well as livelihood. It was a family tragedy that launched the school. And it was the tragedy that provided the idea to begin and the faith to continue building the academy.

In the late thirties a son of Colonel and Mrs. Cox was killed when he fell from a pony. The loss seemed too great to overcome. Nothing lessened the pain. And then the Colonel came to the conclusion that was

to bring the school into existence. If he could work with hundreds of boys, he reasoned, his loss would not seem so great. When he finally conveyed the decision to his wife, she, with the intuition that all women are supposed to have and few do, had already recognized the answer to their personal problem. So the Ponca Military Academy came into existence in the minds of the Coxes.

In 1940, they purchased the property from the Continental Oil Company. Originally built by the late E. W. Marland in the twenties, the buildings were used as a school and country club by the Marland and Continental Oil Companies. In the fall of the same year the academy opened its doors. Eighteen students enrolled in the charter group. Even with husband and wife filling many of the administrative and teaching positions, the job of meeting financial obligations was a harrowing experience. The old saw that one must learn to crawl before he walks must have seemed rankly optimistic to the owners. Financial

How Alumni Make a Living

assistance was supplied from a foreign source. British flyers were being trained at a Ponca City airport. They needed room and board. The academy could handle the job and the contract for accommodations lifted the school out of the red. By the third year, the enrolment had ballooned to more than 75 and the academy was firmly established.

The author made an early September visit to Ponca City to see for himself the school that an idea and the Coxes built. In addition to the physical aspect of the institution, already mentioned, the school is staffed by 14 faculty and staff members. They were busy preparing themselves and the school for a new school year. A few early student arrivals were already at home in the dormitory. (Students are accepted for grades 3 to 12. Each class is limited in size to 10 to 12 students.)

Colonel Cox, as superintendent as well as owner, was directing the pre-school preparation. A genial man of medium build and the smoking habits of Knobby Walsh, the Colonel's chief asset is his sincerity. He believes so strongly in the program he has to offer that it is difficult to keep from agreeing with him.

While I was talking with him, a family from a large out-of-state city stopped by to brief him on the personal history of their son. I was curious. I wondered why a family from several hundred miles away would search out the academy as the school for their son.

The reason should make every father or mother anxious.

Briefly, the story was one which dealt with a protection racket. The pitch was that the son would pay a tight-knit juvenile



ACADEMY DRILL TEAM enjoys a reputation for smartness and precision. Here they are parading in Enid during band festival. Frequent performances help spread the school's reputation.

gang \$1.65 per week or else he would be soundly mauled. When the father and mother discovered the racket, the son had been subjected to forced protection for a year. The parents were unsuspecting. Their son paid the money on a weekly installment plan and there were no unusual financial outlay to give the scheme away. The hoodlums overstepped their bounds and followed their victim home one evening. The family became curious and the story reached its climax. The conclusion to the case history was found in Oklahoma and in an out-of-state reform school. The son was brought to Ponca City and the juvenile delinquents were arrested and sentenced.

The mention of hoodlumism brought up the subject of whether the academy specialized in accepting youngsters who ignored the law. Considered the life blood and specialty of the house in many military institutions, did Ponca Military, I wanted

to know, accept the juvenile delinquent. Colonel Cox gave the question an unqualified no.

He admitted that many times parents of juveniles who brushed with the law did call and request permission to send their boys to him. However, he believed that in the end it was a bad policy to accept them. "Everybody winds up hating the school that way," he said. "The parents are conscious that they 'had' to send their son here; the son is aware that he 'has' to stay here. Neither attitude is conducive to the type of atmosphere we want for the school," he concluded.

The Colonel (the title is honorary, as are all faculty titles at Ponca) was born and grew up in Alfalfa County. An outstanding highschool athlete, he

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LT. WALLACE C. COX



MRS. BLANCHE COX



COL. WILLIAM V. COX

... Ponca Military Academy Is More Than Their Livelihood

O.U.'s First Student . . .

O.U. and his wages as a printer's devil paid his way. The University was supported by a territorial tax of half a mill. An incidental fee, varying from \$3 to \$5, was collected from students.

After leaving O.U. Donehew attended a business college in Fort Worth. He worked as a stenographer in law offices. Later he lived on his mother's farm eight miles northeast of Norman. He continued his studies by mail, and in 1926 was granted a degree from the Tope School of Mental Science, Inc., in Ohio.

Donehew lived in Pauls Valley for 25 years. He did rural circulation work for the *Oklahoma City Times*, *Oklahoman*, *Farmer Stockman* and the *Semi-Weekly Farm News* of Dallas.

O.U.'s first student still has a lively interest in campus affairs. He deplored the recent "panty raids," fearing students are not as serious today as in his time. An enthusiastic football fan, he keeps track of Big Red's progress.

The Donehews and their 15-year-old daughter, Marion Lorene, have a small farm near Stratford. Their home is filled with books and historical data. Marion Lorene does her father's secretarial work, helping him prepare material for a book he hopes to write on "the good old days" at O.U.

Perhaps they can collaborate on the book,

for Dr. Donehew hopes that when Marion Lorene finishes her studies at Stratford she can win a diploma from his alma mater.

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earned seven letters in baseball and basketball at O.U. In addition he was a substitute quarterback on the football team. He was the first paid freshman football coach at the University. His sports interests have not been blunted since he left Norman. A mention of football sent him into a well informed discussion of what the Big Red would have to offer this year.

His interest in sports was supplemented after his graduation from O.U. He went to Carmen as principal and head coach in 1921. Two years later he was back on the campus to do graduate work and coach freshmen athletes. In 1924 he took a job as head coach at Henryetta highschool and produced fine basketball and football teams in his two years there. He kept up his coaching activities at Wentworth Military Academy and the Missouri Military Academy, the two teaching assignments that preceded the founding of the Ponca City school.

An important part of the Colonel's University activities in addition to athletics included membership in Sigma Nu. Perhaps he made his greatest contribution to the University in alumni affairs. He

served for several years as a member of the Alumni Executive Board and was president of the Alumni Association for a year.

Bill Cox has had help from a great many sources in building his school. There were friends who helped by sending their sons to him. There were the British flyers who appeared at a critical time. And most of all, there was a Mrs. Cox who worked as hard as her husband in making their idea a reality. She's a woman of quiet dignity and great poise. Naturally attractive, she is beautiful when she smiles. Mrs. Cox served as a member of the faculty when the school opened and is bookkeeper and registrar today.

A second generation has also provided a source of help and pride for his father. Before being called into service as a naval lieutenant, Wallace C. Cox, '48ba, joined the faculty as principal. "I never told Wally what I wanted him to do. I told him when he made up his mind to let me know. After he graduated from O.U. he said he wanted to help me in the school," Bill Cox said. There was no mistaking the pleasure that the decision gave his father. When Wally is released from the navy he will be back at Ponca City teaching in the academy.

Such is the history of the Ponca Military Academy. And such is the story of its founding. Perhaps no other alumnus would be interested in founding a school, but it can be done. And from what Colonel William V. Cox says, its an interesting way to make a living.

The First Ten . . .

fessor of history, has an enviable reputation among both students and faculty members as a student counselor and a teacher of history. Dr. McReynolds holds three degrees from O.U. including a Ph.D. degree which he received in 1945. Before joining the O.U. staff he served as assistant principal at Classen highschool, Oklahoma City, was a member of the faculty at Central State College at Edmond and was Dean of the Coffeyville Junior College in Kansas.

Another native Oklahoman to be honored by the teaching awards program was Blanche Sommers who came to the University from Helena where her parents own and operate a drug store. Her father, Horace A. Sommers, was one of the early graduates of the University, graduating in 1900. Miss Sommers received B.S. and M.S. degrees in pharmacy from O.U. and for a time was manager and co-owner of a drug store in Edmond. She joined the O.U. Staff in 1942 and has taught many Oklahoma druggists from both a scientific and prac-

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