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Sixty Years of College Humor

Some of the jokes were funny and some were not . . . and some are best forgotten. The author selects an assortment from O.U.'s first 60 years.

By BOB LATTIMORE, '52ba

From its earliest beginnings in a downtown building and on the plains south of Norman, Indian Territory, 1892, the University of Oklahoma has proved by its faculty and activities that it has a heart—and the student body a funny bone.

Perhaps the humor of the new University didn't compare too favorably with the *Harvard Lampoon*, but the desire to titillate has shown remarkable persistence. One major change in 60 years of humor at O. U. has been to bring the behind-the-barn jokes into greater favor.

Let's get out the old stereoscope and get a look at the campus as it was portrayed by *The Mistletoe* in 1905, a forerunner of the *Sooner* yearbook. It presented six seniors and a college yell, "Hi Rickety! Whoop-te-do! Boomer! Sooner! Okla. U."

This was the first year the University had a band. And the 19 new members may have had polite convulsions over this 23-skidoo era joke:

"Mr. Bucklin—"How did the saying "Money talks" originate?"
 "Leach—"The dollar has a woman's face on it."

Recovering from this knee-slapper, let's take a look at the profs and students.

"Visitor at Power house to stoker: 'How can you tell which is professors?'"

"Stoker: 'Them in sweaters and moleskin pants is students, and them in celluloid collars is professors.'"

That's a bit of levity, a la 1907. And what was the younger generation coming to?

"An accurate account of the number and names of people who 'take evening boulevard' has been kept since the new light was put up on the corner. . . It was the plan . . . to publish this account in detail, but considering the fact that Miss Garner, Elosie, Miss Rouse and John Darling and a few others object to having their names in print, we 'dumped' the affair."

Mistletoe in 1908 said that Bennie Owen "has been with us two years and we want him again. . . He has great faith in the game of football and teaches his men to play it clean but hard."

In the *Sooner*, 1909, this was told on Dr. DeBarr:

"Freshman—"Professor, what makes Cu SO₄ blue?"

"Dr. DeBarr—'Cu SO₄ is blue for the same reason a Freshman is green. God made it so.'"

This was the early humor. And it may not be too funny now, but it was like Bennie Owen's football coaching—it was clean. The later generations, adding spice to the concoction, gave some administrators an upset feeling; they put in it the timeless (or timely) ingredients of intimation and sex.

The Sooner in 1910 noted that George Frank Buttram was a pitcher on the baseball team. This was the year when "Glad I Am a Sooner" was sung to the tune of "Dixie" (second verse by the KAs) and a certain story was going the rounds:

"McCombs—'Prof. Buchanan, did you mark me absent?'"

"Prof. B.—'No, I marked you asleep.'"

In 1917 perhaps the mind of the student body, an indefinable object, became a bit more serious—even literary. They made a soliloquy out of this passionate scene: "They stood by the old well together. 'How shall we drink?' he said; 'there is no bucket here.' She lowered her eyes; when she raised them again, they were full of water."

This kind of joke probably prompted Wilson's "Watchful Waiting" ideas.

Literature got knifed in the back with:

"A kiss from a homely girl
Is to my old-fashioned mind
As good as one from a pretty girl—
That is, to a man that's blind."

Wonder who wrote that one? A check showed that well-known author, A. Nonymous.

But what's all the bunting for? Is that band music we hear down the library hall? Yup. It's *The Victory Sooner*, 1919. It was copyrighted by Fayette Copeland, and James P. Shofner.

Just in case any of these persons are teaching around here now, here's a reminder, "Motto: Hours for cramming, but not a minute for study." Or, "Evidently the man who wrote 'life is short and time is fleeting' had an eight o'clock class." Here's another: "Our dear professors seem to have caught some of the spirit of the French at Verdun, 'They shall not pass. They shall not pass.'"

Drag out the raccoon coat, Dad, and tell us about the Stutz "Bearcat." The fabulous roaring twenties are here. Some fellow named Almer S. Monroney had just completed his first, major political campaign by winning the editorship of *The Oklahoma Daily* in the twenties.

A humorous story, a bit of levity, which belies the period is:

"Dumb: 'Who was the greatest inventor?'"

"Dumber: 'An Irishman named Pat Pending.'"

And those 1920 flappers! How many times did a sheik tell this to his sheba? "Our idea of a smart girl is one who can make her complexion taste as good as it looks." Don't race the motor, Dad.

In *The Sooner*, 1926, one Roscoe Cate—who was the editor of *The Oklahoma Daily*—was said to be simply a conductor of the "dynamo of the journalism basement, Prof. Herbert." "Famous Sayings Attributed to Our Own Dr. Bizzell: 'I want this institution to be a place for high living and plain thinking.'"

Doin' the Charleston, bunny-hug and blackbottom with their shebas while Pinky Tomlin was plunking it out on his banjo were Stewart Herral and footballers Frank Potts, Hal Muldrow, Tom Churchill and Al Mayhew. Some fellow named Doc Davis—complete with violin—was rendering a selection called "There's a Hole in the Bucket, Can't You See It" or "Toot your horn and sound your 'A', what in the heck are we gonna play."

In 1928, "It is reported that Van Heflin's hair is rooted in a fertile brain. After looking at Heff's mop, and hearing him talk, students have come to the conclusion that his brain is ALL fertilizer."

And then the thirties . . .

Money may have been hiding, but jokes were plentiful; and the humor got nearly

as raw as the bathtub gin: "Sir," said the maid quite haughtily, 'either take your arm from my waist or keep it still; I am no ukelele.'" You should see the ones we let get away.

"I hear Dora was married last night."

"Yeh? Who gave the bride away?"

"I could have if I had wanted to, but I kept my mouth shut!"

Four-wheel personalities entered the picture. The Model-T collegian had come of age with, "A bachelor is a guy who didn't have a car when he was young."

"Teacher—'Johnny, use the word 'paralysis' in a sentence.'"

"Johnny—'Alice and I were in swimming. Someone stole my trousers and I had to borrow a paralysis.'"

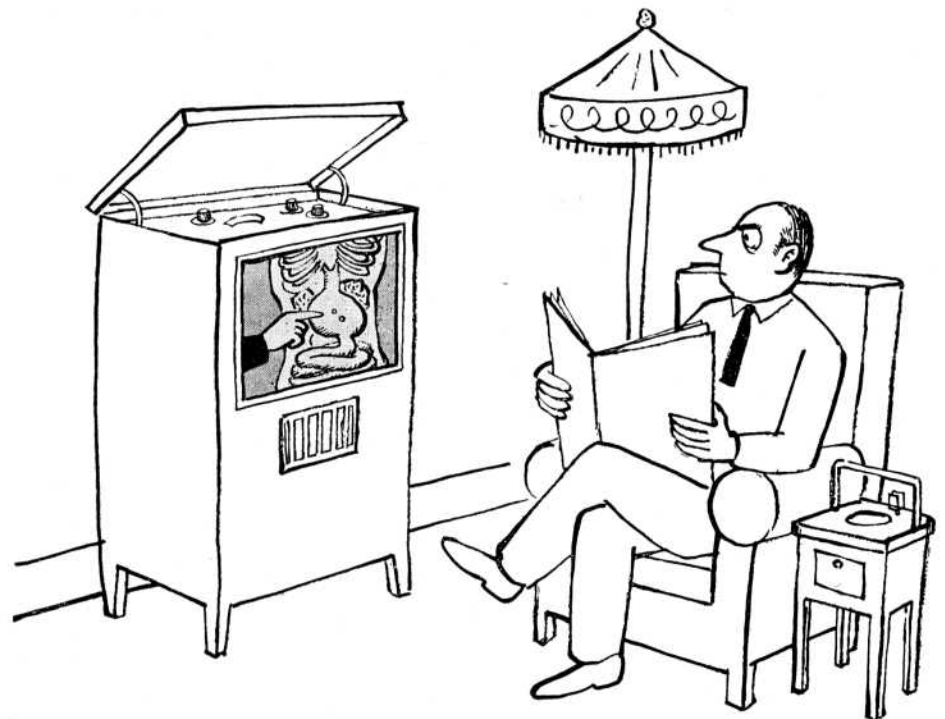
Ray Parr must have liked that. Cartoonist Sam Cobean illustrated high-tension situations like, "Salome, the first woman to discover the relation between gauze and effect."

As usual a firm stand was taken on liquor, "People who carry glass bottles shouldn't sit on stone benches." The situation was explored further with, "Kappa Sig—'Gee, that punch tastes good; but them fish certainly get in your way.'"

Or, "Judge—'Who was driving when you collided with that car?'"

"Drunk (triumphantly)—'None of us. We were all sitting in the back seat.'"

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"Are you one of those seven out of eight people who suffer from stomach distress? Then try Virgo pills. You simply swallow two of these pills with a glass of water. Now watch what happens . . ."

Sixty Years of College Humor . . .

Hey, fellows, remember those short skirts:

"I asked her if she rolled them,
She said she never tried,
Just then a mouse ran by,
And now I know she lied."

When Jack Jacobs faded back for a pass with a smile on his face, it might have been due to his completion average, or maybe he was thinking about:

"Drunk (after bumping into the same tree three times)—'Losht, losht in an impenetrable forces.'"

And when "Little Orvie" Mathews took those end runs, maybe he was thinking about, "First old maid—I bet the man was embarrassed when you caught him looking over the transom!" Second old maid—'Gosh, yes. I thought he'd never get over it.'"

The infamous forties, at least as far as war was concerned, gave up a story like this: "Gullible man is one who thinks that his daughter has been a good girl because she comes home from a trip with a Gideon Bible in her handbag."

Professors were panned with:

"Prof: 'So, you said I was a learned jackass, did you?'"

"Student: 'No, sir. I merely remarked that you were a burro of information.'"

Somebody evidently had marriage on his mind with, "Was he surprised when you

said you wanted to marry his daughter?"
"Was he. The gun nearly fell out of his hand."

A zoology student must have collaborated with someone at a neighboring night club for: "Virtue is learned at mother's knee; but vice at some other joint." Maybe he thought it up coming back on the "Sooner-ville Trolley" from Oklahoma City.

The fifties? They're here. Here's an example:

"The man in the employment office was talking to an O. U. grad fresh out of the Business College. 'Here's a job at the Eagle Laundry. Think you can handle it?'"

"Don't know. I ain't never washed no eagles."

And now, you know, we've got parking meters. That's what might have brought this on, "Little dog looking up at a parking meter:

"Hell, you gotta pay now."

There's the old and the new. In spite of it all, the twains of humor have met. With the former sung, as we said, to the tune of "Dixie"; and the latter with the lyrics of "She's the Sweetheart of Sigmund Freud."

Covering the Campus . . .

missions and registrar, to draw up a plan for the entire University.

The new plan for pre-enrolling, which began November 10 and will continue through December 19, has met with only one main objection: Since actual class sectioning must be done in various departmental offices, many department chairmen

feel that the procedure takes up too much of their secretaries' time.

But it is a step forward. Students may soon be able to look back on the confusion of enrolment and sectioning.

Another thing of the past, at least as far as Football Coach Bud Wilkinson is concerned, is wild enthusiasm of the student body in its support of the O.U. football team.

"It appears that everyone in the state is more interested in our football team than the students are," Wilkinson stated in an *Oklahoma Daily* article by Sports Editor Bill Sampson.

Wilkinson said he believes that the players can feel the lack of support, and that the Saturday game spirit should prevail all through the week.

One big reason for the lackadaisical attitude of students toward the Big Red was laid to the fact that Sooners have come to expect team wins and aren't, as President Cross expressed it, "victory hungry."

Wilkinson also implied that perhaps the viewing of athletic contests as strictly professional entertainment accounts for the student attitude. He pointed out that O.U. students have an option as far as buying tickets is concerned and that prices are twice as high in many schools where the athletic ticket price is included in the general fee.

Whether specifically it's in protest of ticket costs or merely acceptance of the Big Red's habit of winning, the rah-rah days of pennant waving may be over at O.U.



"Watch out for a trick!"