

# Under Cover

By DAVID BURR, '52ba

"When you say that podner, smile," the axiom that guided the westerner's approach to questioning the character of any of his fellowmen, is as outmoded as the flapper.

It could be well rephrased to exchange smile for sneer. It has become a national pastime to publicly question the character of every man, woman or child. Perhaps TV has something to do with the reversal of form. The audio-visual machine has been damned for all our other ills.

However, I am more inclined to think that our shift from believing everyone is innocent until proved guilty to the reverse can be blamed on the confusion and fear that marks our present era.

Whatever the responsible factor, if I were an aspiring politician or headline-maker, I would challenge the nearest "Big" man's reputation with utter disregard for Lincoln's "with malice toward none, with charity for all."

I hate to see the basic trust in the individual be transformed into suspicion. Any southwesterner would. We still form a small island that takes people at their face value. But we are in a minority.

Today, the man who "exposes" the greatest number of Americans in any regard—particularly applicable in the case of suspected Communists—can be assured of a high and honorable station. His revelations, however poorly substantiated, will become accepted as truth by a great many people.

Senator Joseph McCarthy, representing Wisconsin, has proved to everyone's satisfaction that you can ride the pink horse to fame.

From his lofty position as U. S. senator, he has named names and explored the character of a great many people without worrying to smile to remove the sting. Because some of the people on his famous lists have been guilty as charged, it has become somewhat widely accepted that his investigating position is right—if not always right, at least on the side of the angels.

Recently, we have had the intelligence by way of the public prints that the Senator is looking for a new area to explore for another of his famous "purges." Since his favorite whipping post, the State Department, has undergone a change of polit-

ical climate, he informs us that he will delve into the nation's colleges and universities in search of subversion and seeds of treason.

I do not presume to know whether he has started gathering his information or not. If he has, all of us can expect explosive statements, a public listing of names and headlines.

If the times we live in were less clogged with confusion, none of us who are vitally concerned with higher education would have anything to worry about. A rational public opinion would make short shift of irrational statements and conjectures.

However, these are not times when rationality is the watch word of the nation. There is a current of fear running fast and sure. Into this stream steps a man who is skilled in using confusion as a weapon. A man who knows that fear is a mighty cudgel.

Let me state categorically that I am not in collusion or sympathy in any regard with Communism. I do not believe that a Communist should be allowed to teach in our state-supported educational institutions. I do not think the public has any responsibility to provide them with a propaganda platform.

But I am also a foe of the individual who contributes to a nation's epidemic of fear. I can think of no worse place for a people to lose faith than in their institutions of learning. These are the windows that should serve as beacons to light the way to human understanding and truth—the first line of defense against Communism's "Big Lie" technique.

Most professors and teachers will say, if the senator's investigation becomes a reality, that they are not afraid of a thorough investigation of their records. This is hardly the point.

The point is will public opinion become so confused and muddled that the public will come to the conclusion that higher education is a hotbed of subversion—an unfit place for American children to receive their education.

I am placing these thoughts here because higher education, if Wisconsin's senator makes good on his "threat," must look to its alumni for an intelligent defense. Testimony of administrators or professors will mean little. They will be on trial. The

alumnus or alumna who knows the advantages and worth of higher education will be the witness.

Reason in the witness chair can still a great many strident voices.

**Birthday Party.** This month the University had its 60th birthday party and Dr. George L. Cross was honored as he began his 10th year as University president.

Sixty years ago the land that the University occupies was still prairies and the first classes were begun in an old stone building in downtown Norman.

Nine years ago Dr. Cross was appointed to serve as acting president of the University following the resignation of Dr. Joseph Brandt, '21ba.

In February, 1953, both the University and Dr. Cross were on much more stable underpinnings.

On page 2 of this issue, Dr. Cross presents his reflections on the University that he has known as president. He presents his "philosophy" and comments on several major issues that confront any university administrator. His comments are essential reading. You will find that Dr. Cross' reflections also serve as an illuminating portrait of the man as well as of the college president.

An especially interesting and unusual document is the story that I have labelled, "They Were Children Together." The children in this case were Oklahoma and Dr. E. E. Dale, '11ba. Dr. Dale's autobiographical account of his 60 years as an Oklahoma resident will be of interest to thousands of O.U. students who have known him as an advisor, teacher and friend.

It doesn't take a mathematician to read and understand Roscoe Cate's, '26ba, explanation of O.U.'s proposed budget for 1953-55. O.U.'s financial vice president presents a clear accounting of the budget that the State Regents have presented to the Oklahoma legislature.

**A Sinner Am I.** Last month, a story appeared under my byline about Golda Risinger Unkefer, '30ed, and her famous corn meal and mill. In that story I committed the most unpardonable editorial sin of all—I misspelled a name. Several references were made to a Mrs. Retha Dellinger Miller, vice president of the Milling Co. Her name is Mrs. Retha Dellinger Weaver, '19-'20, and (I quote from a recent letter) "has been for thirty-two years." My head is low.