

# My Most Memorable Christmas

Three students, two professors and an alumnus review their Christmases past and recount the moments that held special significance for them—the times that will be remembered this holiday season.

**M**y most memorable Christmas, while not the brightest, left me still believing in Santa Claus. All my holidays at O.U. were the saddest days, for when others left the campus for home, I, being homeless, remained behind to work in a downtown store. Only the caretakers at O.U. can know how cold and forbidding those brick and stone buildings can become in a few hours after the holiday exodus.

By A. P. MURRAH  
Federal Judge

On this particular Christmas, my brethren at the fraternity house not only turned off the furnace, but to further economize, they turned off the lights as well. After working late on Christmas Eve and exchanging best wishes with the

last jolly customers, I rode McIntyre's bus out to the bleak house on Boulevard. There, alone, in the cold and dark, I dreamed of an open fire, of lights, and of laughter. I awoke, startled, and almost afraid to wonder if, after all, there was a Santa Claus.

I arose early Christmas morning to open the store for the last desperate shopper who had forgotten and had been reminded. It was almost noon when one of my regular customers came in, ostensibly to buy a Christmas cigar. After a searching pause, he looked at me and said, "By the way Hap (that is what they called me down town) my wife told me to bring you home for Christmas dinner. We have no children

and really want you to come." It didn't take me long to turn the lock and we were on our way.

As we turned into the driveway of his modest bungalow, the lighted tree in the window burned brightly, and inside the open fire gave out a warm Christmas glow. Mrs. X greeted me with a big hug, and then with turkey and all the trimmings.

When they finally let me out in front of the bleak house on Boulevard, I entered with my faith redeemed.

**A**mericans have no patience with poverty. Most of us deeply resent being situated

among people for whom every day is a struggle for mere existence; or at least we feel embarrassed when we come in contact with them. This attitude is not the result of snobbery or lack of sympathy, but arises from the lack of experience with poverty on the part of most of us.

By BILL SAVAGE  
Law Freshman

I found myself in this frame of mind on Christmas Evening of 1951, while traveling by train to an army post in West Germany from Nurnberg. I had spent Christmas Day with an Army couple in Nurnberg, where I had been treated to all the luxuries of an American Christmas. Now it was depressing to find myself alone among strangers with nothing to do but gaze out the window at the bleak countryside. It had been a cold, somber day; yet, all along the way, I saw Germans standing by the railroad track patiently searching for pieces of coal that had fallen off the coal cars in hopes of supplementing the meagre fuel supplies for that long, cold winter of 1951.

A cold rain began to fall as we reached Munich, where I had a three hour wait before catching the train for Heidelberg. Finding the station too depressing a place to spend the evening, I decided to brave the rain and walk the streets of the city rather than share the misery of the other passengers in the station. As I walked out the street entrance of the station, I noticed a poster fastened to one of the stone columns. It advertised a concert at the University of Munich for that evening—a performance of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony.

Acting on impulse, I hailed a taxi which brought me to the auditorium just fifteen minutes before the concert was due to begin. Inside, I found the hall almost deserted, except for the stage where the orchestra players were tuning their instruments in preparation. Mentally, I began to berate the citizens of Munich for ignoring the opportunity to attend a performance of a great symphony composed by one of their own countrymen. In my eagerness to find fault, I had forgotten that the tickets, cheap as they were, must have been beyond the reach of most Germans.

Suddenly, only five minutes before concert time, as if by prearranged plan, the doors opened and people began to stream in. They were all dressed in what must have been their best clothing, and they were a quiet, intent group as if attendance at this concert was a serious, thought-provoking matter.

I will not attempt to describe the performance of the orchestra. Like most Mid-West Americans my feeling for classical

music tends more toward enjoyment than appreciation. But I remember that from the moment the conductor raised his baton, the audience sat in rapt and reverent attention at the music rolled out through the hall. It was a thrilling experience for me, and I know it was shared by the rest of the listeners.

When it was over and the conductor and orchestra had taken their bows to the enthusiastic applause of the audience, I found myself content to sit and watch the people leave. And as I watched them, I realized that these poor people must have saved for weeks to buy a ticket to this performance. They seemed satisfied with what they had done, as if the evening had met their expectations. They had for a brief hour been given respite from the tedious and unrewarding struggle against hunger and the insecurity that filled their lives, and they were content.

It occurred to me later that Christmas night while on the train bound for Heidelberg that I had accomplished a great deal that evening. One thing was that for the first time since my arrival overseas I had been able to reach a common understanding with these alien people. Too, I had learned that there is a great deal to Christ-

mas besides a succession of gifts, greeting cards and turkey dinners.

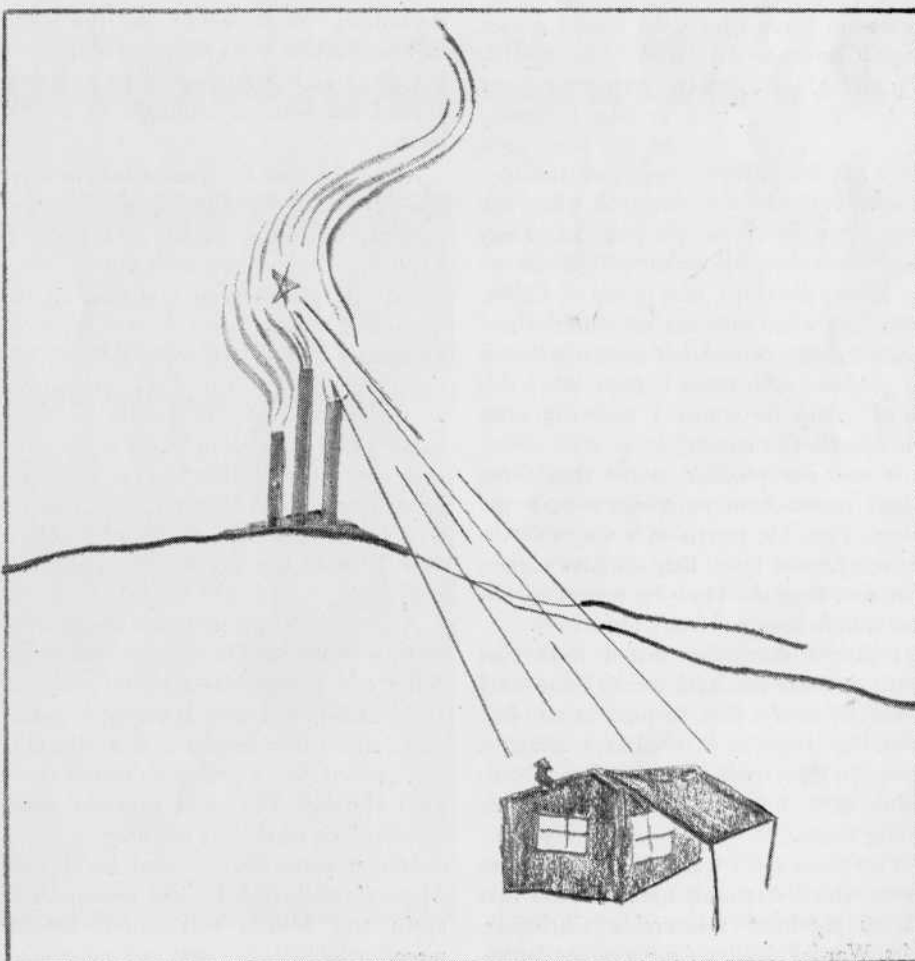
A few years ago, shortly before Christmas, I happened to be hitch-hiking from Norman to Muskogee. It was cold, it was snowing, it was getting dark. The tall smokestacks of a smelter on the east edge of Henryetta were silhouetted against the dark-red sky as I stood at a highway junction.

The smoke from those stacks was heavy and after it poured into the red sky it settled around the shacks belonging to people who worked in the smoky smelter and to the old age pensioners who used to work there. One of those shacks was near where I stood and I could see two elderly people in it. They were alone. I was alone. Soon the three of us were alone together in the shack.

Death was with us there. The old man was dying. He lay still and looked at the world through dimming eyes. The old woman eyed the pictures of her babies, long since grown and gone. She wept.

The woman and I sat at a table with a

By BILL SAMPSON  
Journalism Senior



Through the Smoke, a Star Looked Down

coal oil lamp on it. I took her hand in mine, clasping the wrinkled flesh in the grip of my youth and my soul wept as my face smiled.

She and I sang Christmas carols as the smelter's smoke dirtied the falling snow and made the dying man cough. "Joy to the world, the Lord is come. . ."

And there was another visitor. The powerful emotions of happiness and faith overwhelmed us as we continued to sing and weep—only now we wept with the joy of life, for on that night, the three of us, the people of the earth, again received our King. We were no longer alone with only the angel of death for company, for new life was with us. The dying man smiled. "Hark, the herald angels sing. . ."

Now that roadside shack is abandoned. But one thing has not been abandoned—the memory of inner contentment, calmness of soul, and the joy of Christmas experienced that dreary night in a dirty shack remains with me as one of the finest Christmas gifts I have ever received.

I have experienced several Christmas days. As I try to recall the most memorable one I am compelled to divide them into three groups: the first, those wonderful Christmas seasons which one remembers as a youngster who believes—really believes—in Santa Claus; the second group, those Christmas days when some special, significant, and important events force one

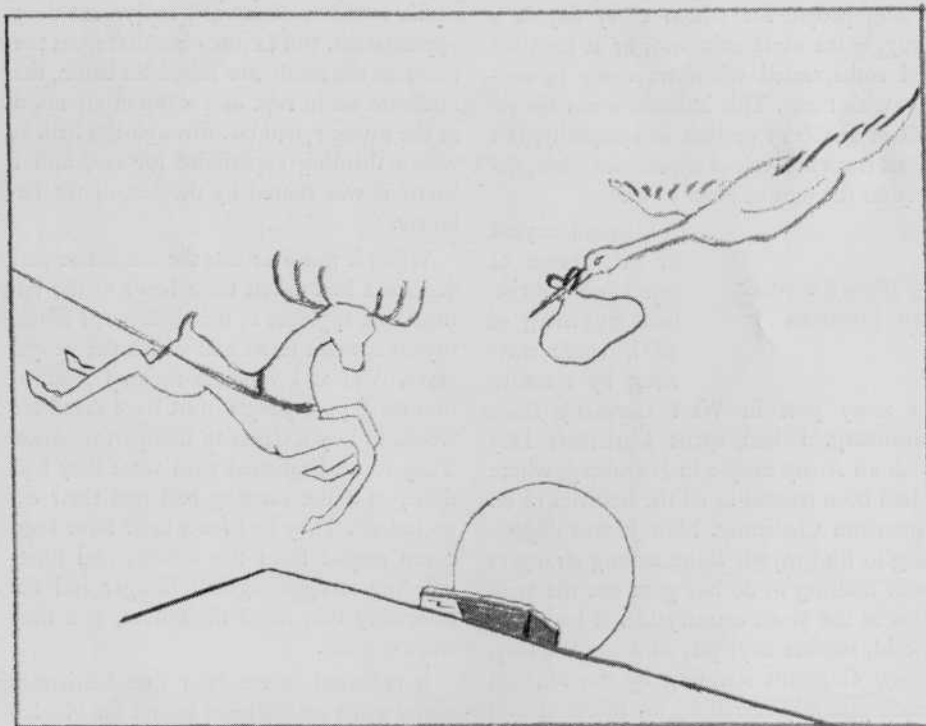
By M. L. Wardell  
History Professor

to take inventory of the past, present, and future—such as when one is in an army camp and cannot go home; the third, that group of Christmas days when one sees his children and grandchildren come home for a real honest to goodness Christmas. It is probably this third group in which I find my most memorable Christmas.

It was always clear to me that Santa Claus comes from somewhere near the North Pole. He travels in a sleigh drawn by reindeer—I think they all have names, I'm sure they do. How he travels so fast has always been a mystery to me.

I cannot remember that I have ever learned where the stork comes from but I know he always flies. In pictures he—he? well, let it go at that—always brings a message that speaks for itself. Come to think of it I have never seen the stork going home.

Five years ago I was concerned with an event which was most unusual. And that makes my most memorable Christmas. Mrs. Wardell, Melissa (our younger daughter) and I, drove to Fayetteville, Arkansas



Which Fly Faster—Reindeer or Storks?

where our older daughter, Margaret Ann, her husband, Jack, and their daughter, Jan, then four years old, were living. Jack was teaching in the University of Arkansas.

On Christmas Eve everyone prepared for the annual visit of Santa Claus. Just when he would arrive was a matter of conjecture, but all of us knew it would be sometime around the hour of midnight or a little later.

About the time for Santa Claus to drive up—or down—there was a fair degree of certainty that the stork was on his way to Fayetteville. Now two such callers at the same time places quite a burden on the hosts. One always leaves cookies, apples or something like that for Santa Claus but I've never known—and don't yet know—what should be left for a stork. It simply wouldn't do for both to arrive at the same time with no cookies for Santa and it would be embarrassing to place the wrong dish—well, on the door steps, for the stork. Moreover, it could become confusing to everybody.

A long family conference was held. I had never attended a conference like that. Some said prepare for both in case both arrive at the same time. If the stork should come either first or last that would take care of itself. We hoped Santa would arrive first. He did. The stork came in about eight o'clock Christmas morning.

Margaret and Jack named her Kathy. Mrs. Wardell and I were grandparents again and Melissa was aunt to another niece.

This was a real Christmas—a memor-

able one.

Reindeer run faster than storks fly—but not much.

The Jewish holiday, Hanukkah, takes place on the 25th day of Kislev, the Hebrew month which happens to correspond to December. We all know what this season means to children—games, presents, extra special foods, company, a general air of excitement centered in the home.

My most memorable Hanukkah took place in 1946, when my brother was nine, my sister eight and I thirteen. This year was to be something different. Usually Mother and Dad

took care of all the arrangements, but we three wanted something "super" this year. We chose the third night, a Wednesday, out of the eight-day celebration to give a party for our friends.

On the first night, as usual, we went to the home of Grandfather Byers to watch the lighting of the first candle in the eight-branched candleholder called a Menorah. Grandfather then told the thrilling legend of the Maccabees and their valiant fight to save Judea from Syrian conquest in 165 B. C. E. Then all of us—seven grandchildren—were given candy treats and Hanukkah gelt, or holiday money.

On the second night a similar ceremony took place in the home of Grandfather Fagin.

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best, but it seems to me that there are many that do know what they want to do.

*QUESTION: What is the value of a degree from a purely economic standpoint?*

#### A NECESSARY EVIL

**Stewart:** I think it's worth less than it ever has been before monetarily. Now it is only a starter. You go into so many things and, if you fill out a form, there's a line there for you to list your education and in many of them a degree is required. But that isn't a guarantee of starting out with any money other than in the teaching profession. They ask degrees now in so many different industries that actually are not so very technical. It is merely a starting place. It gives you something to start on. But I don't think it is worth as much to the individual now, monetarily, as it was before. It is almost a prerequisite for employment in many things. Even in our business. If we put somebody on for maybe \$30.00 or \$40.00 a week as a cub, he has to have a degree. He either has to have that or a whole lot of experience and then he isn't a cub.

**Don:** May I ask you this question? How does that help his advancement?

**Stewart:** Nominally, it will help in that he will have a little bit more equipment to start out with, but it doesn't guarantee him anything.

**DeVier:** Is there any value in distinguishing for discussion here between a regular college degree, say an A. B., an arts degree of some sort and say a professional degree? Or are we still talking about a particular business at any rate?

**Stewart:** Well, I think that you have to have one in almost any field. It would be worth more to you going into certain fields. In other words, you'd make more money as a graduate engineer than as a graduate school teacher, or if you were going to Oklahoma City to work for a credit company. They're going to send you out to try to collect money from the dead beats, but they want you to have a degree to go out and extract \$37.50 from a man who didn't make his payments. They'll pay you \$200.00 a month to do it. If you have a degree in petroleum engineering you get \$350.00 a month to start with because you are able to start on a specific technical phase of their operation. But in each case they want you to have a degree.

**DeVier:** Sort of a necessary evil.

**Wardell:** What I wonder, Mr. Stewart, and I'm sure students wonder this but I ask for information, why is it that business, industry, the employers do want the young people whom they employ to have degrees?

**Stewart:** For a number of reasons, in-

cluding some of the things you were talking about a while ago. The mere fact that they have been in school for four years, they know that they have learned other things besides what they had in class. They are going to have to meet the public in any business they're in. Even if you have somebody that's stuck off in the back room of a laboratory, there are times when they have to meet other people. And they're asking for not only the degree, but that business of living with other people, and having a certain amount of what you might call "front." All those things they want. Not only the technical knowledge or the fact that someone was an "A" student or a "B" student, or anything.

**Betsy:** Also the social angle, too.

**Stewart:** All of it. And we've put much emphasis on the social part of it. More of it all the time.

*QUESTION: From purely a social standpoint, what value does a degree hold?*

#### WITH REVERSE ENGLISH

**Stewart:** You can almost make a reverse to that and say what does the lack of a degree mean socially? Owing to all this big increase in education over the years and the higher percentage of persons going all the time, and the social contacts that are made in college that are continued afterward, and various organizations that are continued on an alumni status, that there actually is much more of a feeling of some who didn't quite get a degree that they lack something than there is for the possessor of a degree to think he's gained something.

**Wardell:** That's an interesting comment, isn't it?

**DeVier:** I think that the person who doesn't have a college degree has a certain amount of catching up to do. As you say, as far as from the social consciousness that you're talking about, you don't have anything that is the be-all, end-all of anything that is going to automatically make a better person out of you. You just have had that much longer to soak up by osmosis, if nothing else, a little culture that the person who hasn't had that advantage is going to have to attain by self-education or acquaintanceship with his fellow man and catch up a little bit.

**Stewart:** I think that's more true of women than it is of men because of the many activities that they get into. And I think other women, university women, shall we say, sometimes get a little catty with women who did not go to a university.

**Don:** Professional snobbery?

**Betsy:** You talk about women, it's worse in men. I can tell you for sure.

**Don:** I started to say intellectual, but professional snobbery is better.

**Betsy:** It's worse in the men.

**Wardell:** It's worse than the men?

**Betsy:** It's worse in the men.

**Don:** Oh, how could it be, Betsy?

**Betsy:** There is nothing worse than a man who's a snob!

**Don:** Unless it's a woman.

**Betsy:** No sir, there's just nothing worse than a man who's a snob.

**Don:** I don't think that argument is going to get anywhere.

**DeVier:** I don't think there is any sexual basis towards snobbery, anyway.

*QUESTION: What is the real worth of a college degree?*

#### 21 POINTS CREDIT WITH ACQUISITION

**Wardell:** Then, would you say it is this way: A degree is sort of a trade mark?

**Don:** Yes, it is. I think it is more of a cultural fallacy. Like I said before, too much emphasis is placed on it. And I want a degree when I leave here, too, just like everyone else. As far as what my education is going to mean to me personally—I don't think that a degree has direct effect on it. It's not going to make me think any more logically.

**Stewart:** It starts you off with that 21 points credit. A mere acquisition of it.

**Wardell:** That's right.

**Betsy:** That's actually the importance of a school.

**Stewart:** It gives you a start.

#### Memorable Christmas . . .

The next night was our party. We three children had made a huge wooden Menorah and had painted it silver, with orange candles tipped with red for the flames. To this we attached blue and white electric lights, since these are the colors of the Jewish flag. At the base we placed gifts for the children coming to our party. The house was decorated with blue and white crepe paper, cutouts of six-pointed stars, elephants, lions, Menorahs, all of which are associated with the holiday. There were cookies in the same shapes and latkes, a potato pancake always eaten during this festival.

In addition to holiday singing, we played dreidel, a game of chance using a spinning top painted with symbolic letters. Each child was given a bag of nuts to win or lose in the game. Then followed an impromptu dramatization of the fight between Judah Maccabee, the Jewish hero, and the Syrian

king, which officially ended the evening celebration.

As I look forward to this festive Hanukkah season I remember vividly the celebration in 1946 and all of the great fun, yet deep significance that it now connotes.

**T**his assignment is a bit unusual for me—"My Most Memorable Christmas." For some reason, perhaps temperament or childhood training, or . . . I am not inclined to write on such personal matters, or not so gifted. It could be that I am unable to single out one Christmas over a half century, more or less. May I select, then, a few instances? There may be no connection among them, or perhaps there is.

By J. C. FEAVER  
Philosophy Professor

Out of the past. The Christmas after World War I, a vivid and lingering and growing question. Writ deep on my childhood mind were stories of the war. Writ deep too was the Christmas story. Are the war stories and the Christmas story both true? Did I understand the question? Do I now?

In the thirties, traveling homeward after a year and some months on the other side of the continent. On crossing into my home state, I ejected an unrestrained animal war whoop. The calm response of a remarkable woman: "Christmas redeems the past and opens the future."

The Christmas after World War II, with my family listening to a magnificent 160-voice choir sing Handel's "Messiah." At the climax of the "Hallelujah Chorus," our little boy leaned over and asked, "Is Jesus a man of sorrows and a prince of peace too?" What had been going on in the mind of this lad to prompt this question?

And in the future? This Christmas I shall listen to the presidential address of one of my colleagues to the Southwest Philosophical Society. His paper is entitled, "The Wisdom of Love"—perhaps a wise twist to the Socratic view of philosophy. Will this be (is it) the Christmas message: the wisdom of love?

Or . . . out of the past. What of the expression on the face of a three-year-old on opening her gifts? And in the future, what of the joy and awe of another three-year-old this month?

## Maryland, My Maryland . . .

school worries until classes resume January 3, 1954.

Two special Christmas programs were

held before the holidays. A University choral concert was presented December 13, under the direction of Chester Francis and members of the Orchestis modern dance club gave their annual interpretation of "The Juggler of Notre Dame" December 15 in Holmberg hall. The dance-drama is based on the legend of a street entertainer who had no gift but his ability to juggle to offer the Madonna.

Orchestis members also presented "The Juggler" over Tulsa and Oklahoma City television stations. Carolyn Way, Oklahoma City, danced the Juggler, and Jean Fischer, Edmond, portrayed the Madonna.

The traditional "Hanging of the Greens" was held in the Women's quadrangle December 13. The program, honoring faculty members, told folk-lore of the Druids, Scandinavians, Romans, Egyptians, English, Jews and the modern Christmas practices of Americans. Jo Ann Wagner, Enid, was chairman of the presentation.

Athletics were not forgotten before the holidays. The Sooners were to meet Oklahoma A.&M. basketballers on the home court December 16.

One of the biggest campus-wide elections in recent years was held last month when senior class officers and 16 student senators were elected.

Fred L. Cook, Holdenville, edged Boots Taliaferro, Oklahoma City, by six votes to take over the reigns of the 1954 senior class. Other class officers are Otis Gallas, Kermit, Texas, vice president; Kathleen Smith, Clinton, secretary, and Richard Elms, Erick, treasurer.

Jon Withrow, senior engineering student from Seminole, was elected to head the Student Senate as president for the new semester. Other new officers are Al Alschuler, Lubbock, Texas, vice president; Ernestine Smith, Guthrie, recording secretary; Ann West, Antlers, corresponding secretary; John Dean, Sapulpa, treasurer; Arnold Fagin, Oklahoma City, parliamentarian, and Sherman Coffman, Ponca City, director of public relations.

Both elections ran smoothly and no ballot boxes were reported stuffed as was the case during the March, 1952, senate election. However, a bobble did occur when student senators questioned the qualifications of a former senate president elected to represent the graduate college.

Quay Williams, graduate student from Duncan, was elected automatically to a senate seat because he and two other graduate students were the only candidates for the three graduate school representatives.

Closing a five-hour session, senators voted 25-3 not to seat Williams on the

grounds of his past record as senate president. Williams appealed his case to the student conduct committee of the University and said he would take it to the Board of Regents if necessary. He was seated December 3 when the senate reversed its field.

Outstanding theologians visited the campus during Religious Emphasis Week, December 6-11. Convocations were held throughout the week in Holmberg Hall. Marlene Miller, Oklahoma City, was R.E.W. chairman. The Drama School presented a religious play during the special week.

The annual Matrix Table dinner sponsored by members of Theta Sigma Phi, honorary journalism fraternity for women, was held November 19 in the Union ballroom.

Martha Plummer, president, presented awards to Marlene Miller, Oklahoma City, outstanding senior woman; Helen Gregory, associate professor of physical education for women, outstanding faculty woman, and Mrs. Maud Lorton Myers, publisher of the *Tulsa World*, outstanding state woman.

Doris Fleeson, Washington columnist, spoke at the annual dinner attended by 400 students, faculty members and prominent state women.

The mysterious disappearance of three O.U. trophies, the Sugar bowl, Big Seven and bronze Texas hat trophies, caused quite a bit of excitement on campus last month. The prizes were taken from a Union exhibit case three weeks before the traditional O.U.-A.&M. football game. An accusing finger was pointed at the Aggies, who earlier had stolen "Big Red," blunderbus used to herald Sooner touchdowns.

The Sugar Bowl and Big Seven trophies turned up in Perry when an unidentified young man attempted to mail a "mysterious looking" package to W. H. Freeland, '38fa, Union manager. The third trophy was discovered December 2 by a gardener in some shrubs on the A.&M. campus.

Greek Row will be expanded soon with the addition of another national social fraternity, bringing the number to 25. Rho Lambda, local fraternity petitioned the Delta Kappa Epsilon council and expansion committee, received word that the fraternity's council has approved its chapter. The approval of the Deke council clears the way for formal petitioning by the group in December at the national convention of the fraternity. Mike Sandlin, Henryetta, is Rho Lambda president.