

IN THIS PICTURE taken near the turn of the century in Enid, Guy Y. Williams (third from right) poses with members of a circus troupe. Second from right is Dr. John E. Darling, '06ba, '08ms, now a physician in Durango, Colorado. A few years later, both Williams and Darling entered O.U.

The Fabulous Guy Y.

Few people have left the University without meeting or hearing about Dr. Guy Y. Williams. His O.U. story started 47 years ago and the results of that tenure have grown into legend.

By ROBERT TALLEY, '55

The tales about Guy Y. Williams are legion.

They go on and on. True and not true. Extravagant and multiplied. Based on a firm belief that "if he didn't do it he probably would have, given the time."

This is the real story of the Fabulous Dr. Williams, the true story of a man who during 47 years with the University has grown from student to faculty member to near legend.

His story is much that of the University's. From youth to an alive maturity, active, friendly, forceful. Three parts academic, one part renegade.

As those who have heard his name know, Guy Y. Williams is not an ordinary man. He was not brought up in an ordinary way. His heritage is far from commonplace.

Williams' father was a Confederate captain from Virginia at 18, the breed of Virginian to whom the United States was too small after the South was stripped of its glory. A visionary with what it took to carry out his visions. Dr. Williams' father gathered two brothers and their belongings together and sailed to Cuba. Wandering for adventure and profit, they ended up in Brazil. One brother stayed there and was never heard from again, and the two remaining men returned to this country through Panama and up through the inner regions of Mexico. Later Williams' father found himself in Kentucky studying medicine at Louisville Medical College, where he learned enough to be a pretty good country doctor.

From there he headed West, perhaps feeling the pressure of the times, buying

and selling hogs and cattle and mules through Tennessee and Arkansas and Missouri, down to Bloomfield, Texas, where he arrived in 1870 with 80 mule teams.

With this 160-head he freighted for the government and for settlers all the way out into New Mexico, occasionally grouping his wagons to fight off bands of horse-hungry Comanches and Apaches.

Giving up the hauling, he went into the mercantile business and started practicing medicine. In about 1881 he took his family, which now included young Guy Y., who was six months old, and moved to Wichita Falls, becoming its first postmaster and running a general store, grocery store, dry goods store and saloon — all under one roof. Later he took on the job of county treasurer. Although his tenure is presumed successful, his business went bankrupt

when, during hard times, he took on too much credit.

After this failure, the Williams family moved to Amarillo, where they built the city's first residence, in what is now the center of the business district.

At this point, Dr. Williams picked up the story.

"When the city was incorporated my father became the first chief of police, and for a kid, I got rich. I made 25 cents a head for roping and bringing in stray pigs and dogs. One time I found an old female with 11 puppies, and I brought in \$3 worth at one shot."

Leaning back in his chair with his arms characteristically overhead gripping an imaginary trapeze, Dr. Williams continued.

"In Amarillo when I was growing up, all the kids wanted to be cowboys and I got to be a pretty good roper and a fair rider for a little kid. One day I even roped a wolf out on the prairie and brought it in alive. The pony I was using was the best cutting horse on the Texas plains. I could take the bridle off and knee him in the direction I wanted him to go. And if a cow didn't go where Old Bill wanted her to, he would take her by the root of her tail and throw her until she went.

"Now this horse was a prima donna—father and the horse hated each other. But mother and I could hitch him to a buggy or I could ride him with kids strung from his tail to his ears and he would be as gentle as you please.

"I taught him to buck like an outlaw," Dr. Williams continued, chuckling, "and I used to win money off smart kids who thought they could ride him."

Some time after that, Dr. Williams' father bought a race horse to make the run into the Cherokee Strip. The horse proved a good one because his father staked claim to some excellent land east of Enid during the rush.

When the family arrived near Enid, Dr. Williams' education had totalled one week in Wichita Falls ("They put me on a front seat and there was a big kid behind me who kept pulling my hair. I told him if he didn't stop I'd hit him. He kept at it; I hit him, and I was out of school.") and through the sixth grade in Amarillo.

"I didn't go to school for my first three years after we got into the Cherokee Strip," Dr. Williams commented, re-lighting his pipe and pushing his feet a little farther up onto the desk. "I had met a bunch of cowpunchers who had been to Dodge City and they said that every Kansan, man, woman and child was a horse thief and a liar—so I wouldn't associate with them."

During that next three years, the young people of the surrounding areas didn't find the new Williams boy much to their liking either. The family lived directly between two feuding north-south districts, and when he would go into the north, a gang would mob him for being a south kid, and if he would enter the south section, a group there would take him on as a part of the north bunch.

"After a while, I got tired of it," Dr. Williams declared wryly, "and so I went both places and cleaned up on them." He didn't say how he did it or what he used, but considering the odds, it's not too hard to figure.

That matter settled, and between farming and handling cattle, he went to high school, graduating in 1902 at 20 years of age. Of this time he said, "I had read enough of my father's medical books to decide to study chemistry." Eyes crinkling, he added, "I didn't need seven or 10 deans and 49 counselors to help me decide what I wanted to study."

At the University he worked as a gardener while he waited two years for a football player to graduate and leave the position of dispensing clerk and lab assistant in the Chemistry School open for him. He held this job his last years as a student, making \$20 a month the first year and that plus a \$5 raise the next.

The year 1906 was a big one for the young man, for he became instructor, and married Ella Thomas, who was graduated in biological sciences the same year. They are still married and live in Norman after 48 years.

And with the year 1906, much of the legend that surrounds the name of Guy Y. Williams received its big push.

During his high school days, Dr. Williams had built a gymnasium complete with parallel bars, trapeze and other homemade equipment where he worked out evenings after work. When he became proficient—and there was a shortage of acrobats in Oklahoma, as one might imagine—he appeared locally in travelling circuses, coming home at the end of a day spent farming or digging ditches, to take a bath, dress in his costume and perform that night.

When he arrived at the University, David C. Hall, then athletic director, organized a crew—Williams included—and staged shows in Norman and Oklahoma City opera houses. These took place for four years and played to full houses: Professor Bailey and His Troupe, spangles and all.

Williams, who has a flair for the dramatic that has revealed itself throughout his life, concluded his discussion of this period with the comment that "I shocked

some of the pious women of the faculty by doing my act in a mother Hubbard."

Surprisingly, this faculty member who would swing from a trapeze in women's clothes during such austere times was accepted as a sort of trouble shooter for the University. After about 1914, President Stratton D. Brooks developed a way of calling him over to the Administration Building when he needed a diplomatic assistant with a muscular arm.

Later Dr. Williams, who by this time had gone on to get his M.A. from O.U. and M.S. from the University of Chicago and his Ph.D. from the University of Illinois, was named to the discipline committee, to the Athletic Council, which he served as president, and to the post of athletic director "between Biff Jones and Benny Owen."

And, after returning from the Mexican Border where he was a first lieutenant under Gen. John J. Pershing, he headed a movement in 1917 to form an organized military training program. Dr. Williams was elected colonel in charge, with Benny Owen his lieutenant colonel.

"We voted it in on a Tuesday and on Monday we were out sizing companies and forming them into ambulance and engineer units, the remainder as infantry. We worked fast," Dr. Williams chuckled.

Two years later the Reserve Officers Training Corps was invited to come to O.U. The man who had organized the setup then became chairman of the board of review, a body designed to restrain disciplining power from the Army and to keep it in the hands of the University.

Here, Dr. Williams shifted in his chair, drew on his pipe, reached overhead for the habitual bar and continued.

"Around this time I decided I was getting too fat, and took up hunting as a hobby. Then I bred dogs and put them in field matches, and later on became a judge." He didn't talk much about this, but Mrs. Williams said hunting and hunting dogs are one of his great loves. He has been listed as a top judge in field trials, and at one time served as president of the Oklahoma division of the American Field Trial Association. Upon retirement from active teaching two years ago, he gave up his dogs and relaxed into another hobby, the study of languages. He has a running knowledge of French, German, Spanish, Italian and Greek. He took up Greek after receiving his Ph.D. on the grounds that "an educated man shouldn't use something he doesn't understand"—he had been using Greek symbols in his chemistry.

In addition, if this would not fill the time of any man, Dr. Williams was acting state chemist for the Board of Health for

a year and for three or four years was top cutter on the State Board of Weights and Measures.

At the close of World War II, Dr. Williams organized the veterans homecoming program and served as a middleman between the veteran and the Veterans Administration. And from 1916 until 1946, he helped direct and conducted more than 100 commencement exercises, including those for the University as well as for the military groups taking series of courses on campus. He also found time to serve as chairman of the Department of Chemistry.

In 1952 after 46 years of trouble-shooting and teaching, Dr. Williams resigned his post for the title of Professor Emeritus of Chemistry. Now, much of his time is spent coaching budding chemists.

During that nearly half-century, Dr. Williams became a legend at the University. Mainly, he says, because of things he didn't do.

There were and are stories of his strength and agility, of standing on his head to deliver a lecture on equilibrium, of giving pop quizzes on days that he entered the classroom through the transom . . . and on and on and on . . . including one that Dr. Williams offered a student an "A" if the boy could throw him.

At the mention of these yarns, Dr. Williams leaned back in his swivel chair, feet cocked on his desk and guffawed, categorically denying each one—with, however, reservations.

"Some of these stories have some foundation; some of them don't. As for the transom, I might have climbed up a door to get it open when it was locked from the inside, but the other isn't true. And I've talked to some people who swear they saw me do it, when they couldn't possibly have!"

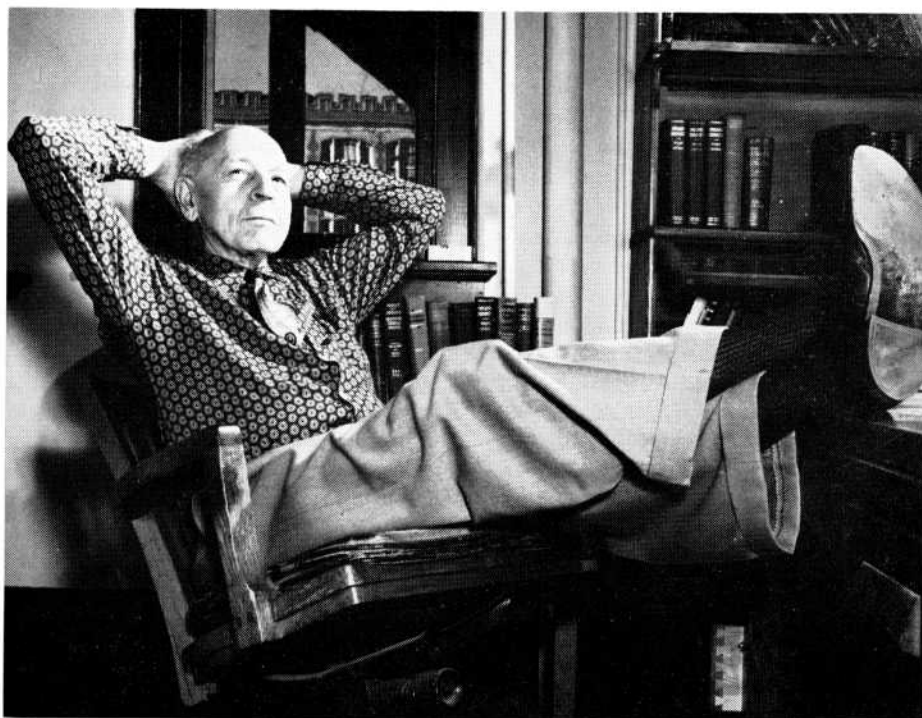
And he denied having stood on his head for an hour during a class. He says he might have done an arm balance on his desk to illustrate chemical equilibrium—"but not on my head."

"And," he declared, "it is not true that I offered a student an "A" if he could throw me. I did keep a 50-pound barbell around that I used to exercise with. Once I told a student whom I had beaten at raising it overhead with one arm that if he could raise it five times more than I by the end of the semester he would be excused from the final exam with an "A" in the course." The student wisely turned down the offer.

Wisely, because Dr. Williams—on a bet set up by several students—outdid a 220-pound guard on the football team, and was never beaten.

"I had just injured my right arm doing giant swings," Dr. Williams said wryly, "and they sent this Indian boy in to my office. I had to raise that thing 35 times with my left hand to beat him." Dr. Williams stood 5 feet, 8 inches tall and weighed less than 165 pounds!

The Fabulous Dr. Guy Y. Williams.



THE FABULOUS DR. GUY Y. WILLIAMS relaxes in his office in the Chemistry Building where he is now professor emeritus of Chemistry. Dr. Williams, whose career at O.U. has become near legend, retired in 1952 and now spends his spare time tutoring beginning chemistry students.

Active Retirement

What do professors find to do to keep them busy after they retire? A sampling of retired professors (besides Dr. Williams) turned up the following:

A. J. Williams, geology, Norman, is doing research work. At press time, however, Dr. Williams was hospitalized.

Oren F. Evans, geology, Norman, is continuing research work.

Roy Temple House, modern languages, is living in Norman. When he is able he does editorial work for *Books Abroad* and other editorial work.

J. L. Rader, '08ba, '13ma, former librarian, Norman, is teaching a course on the History of Books for the School of Library Science. He also is spending a portion of his time enjoying golf.

Dr. O. B. Jacobson, School of Art, Norman, continues to paint and exhibit his work. He does some lecturing and art research work.

E. J. Ortman, education, is living now in Santa Monica, California.

John F. Bender, education, Norman, worked on "research on retirement" and with "the state department of public instruction as consultant on a school building survey that was made in every state under the direction of the U. S. Department of Education" after retirement.

S. W. Swenson, government, Norman, is spending most of his time working with real estate.

F. G. Tappan, engineering, Norman, suffered a stroke about a year ago and is inactive.

J. L. Lindsey, '15, former comptroller, Norman, is raising Aberdeen Angus cattle.

Aute Richards, zoology, is living in Tucson, Arizona. He visited the campus in October and reported that he is spending much of his time writing.

Roy Gittinger, '02ba, Norman, is "teaching same old history class on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays." He reviews books and is doing research work.

John Cheadle, law, is living in Norman. Reported he had been too busy with own affairs to do much legal work. Intends to begin research work in near future.

Sanford M. Salyer, English, is living in Norman. Failing eyesight has caused curtailment of work.

Charles E. Decker, geology, Norman, is doing extensive research work on graptolites.

E. E. Dale, '11ba, history, Norman, recently returned to the U. S. after a year spent in Australia lecturing under the Fulbright program.