



PROFESSOR R. V. JAMES, teacher, administrator, engineer, businessman, gives a group of students a problem during one of his classes. As chairman of the School of General Engineering, he is known as a patient man and a thorough instructor as well as a teacher who can throw a tough exam.

Portrait of an Engineer

Born in the corn country of Illinois, R. V. James moved to Oklahoma when he was seventeen. He's been here ever since—most of the time on the University campus.

By ROBERT TALLEY, '55

Richard Vernon James has been a part of this university for more than 34 years and for an uprooted Illinois farm boy, he has done well here. He is a successful engineer, teacher, administrator, businessman.

To his students he is known as a friendly, patient man, thorough in his subject with a capacity for throwing some of the hardest exams imaginable. He has done and does hard work, and he would like his students—so they may graduate able professionals—to do the same.

As a professor of engineering and chairman of the School of General Engineering, he is one of the real old-timers on the campus. As a person he belies his age, typifying what one might imagine an engi-

neer to be: quiet, stable, devoted to his field, an exacting person.

James, now 61, grey-haired, brisk, was born in the blacklands country of central Illinois in 1892. His father farmed 100 acres in some of the most fertile land in the United States, and James led the life of the boy on the farm, morning and night milking two cows and riding five miles to school in a buggy.

In free time—and there was little of it—he walked two miles to a stream to fish and he hunted rabbits in the snow. In high school, he played basketball using a deserted store as a court. Football had been outlawed as too dangerous.

As young boys do during adventure-some years, James tried his first real bus-

iness venture—and it was not as successful as his later ones. As he told it, "I had a shotgun and I planned to get rich selling rabbits. But as it turned out, I could get only five cents for my rabbits, and the shotgun shells cost two cents each. There wasn't much profit so I gave it up."

However, he and neighboring boys more successfully trapped muskrat and shipped the skins to St. Louis, where brokers were paying a going price of 35 cents a pelt. Not much but a quarter and a dime would bring home seven pounds of sugar or buy one of the best meals in town with 10 cents left over for brown sugar or several dips into the cracker barrel.

Illinois being corn country, it was in

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James F. Jarrett, '52pharm, formerly of Ponca City, is living at 729 N.E. 34th Terrace, Oklahoma City.

Richard L. Mayes, '52bus, and Mrs. Mayes, the former Jo Ann McKibben, '50ed, Oklahoma City, have chosen the names Cynthia Ann and Deborah Sue for their twin daughters born January 26.

Lt. William E. Hackett, Jr., '52bus, Alva, was awarded the silver wings of an airforce pilot during graduation ceremonies held February 1, at Reese Air Force Base, Texas. While at O.U. he was a member of Alpha Tau Omega and the Air Knockers.

SUTTLE-GILL: Miss Patricia Joanne Suttle, '52 bus, Oklahoma City, became the bride of Joe Gill, Wichita, Kansas, February 7 in the First Baptist Church, Oklahoma City. The couple is at home in Wichita.

Lt. Fred W. Young, '52eng, Yazoo City, Mississippi, received his new bars promoting him to the rank of first lieutenant. Young is an executive officer of Company A, 7th Engineer Battalion, at Camp Pendleton, California.

Mrs. Bernice M. Peace, '52mæd, is at home at 519 South 4th Street, Brownfield, Texas. Mrs. Peace is a teacher in the Brownfield primary school.

Lt. Clifford A. Lindell, '52m.eng, Fuquay Springs, North Carolina, is serving as executive officer of B Company, 8th Engineer Battalion, at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina.

PHILLIPS-TROTTER: Miss Phyllis A. Phillips, '52bfa, Lawton, became the bride of Capt. William H. Trotter, Morganton, North Carolina, February 21 in the new post chapel at Fort Sill. The couple is at home at 1111 Arlington Ave., Lawton.

William Pierce Chrisman, '52eng, is a petroleum engineer with the United Oil Well Service. His address is Apartado 35, Barcelona, Venezuela, South America.

MULLINS-GIBSON: Miss Priscilla Dean Mullins, Albuquerque, New Mexico, and Lt. Richard A. Gibson, '52eng, Oklahoma City, were married February 13 in the Central Methodist Church, Albuquerque. After a wedding trip to Colorado Springs, the couple is at home in Albuquerque.

'53 Lt. Wadell Findley, '53bus, Duncan, has joined I Corps in Korea. The corps, one of three in Korea, coordinates the intensive post-truce training and reconditioning of UN units under its control. Lt. Findley is a motor officer with Service Battery of the 96th Field Artillery Battalion.

Ismail Hakki Arman, '53eng, is living in Istanbul, Turkey, where he is an interpreter in the Turkish Army.

Lt. Richard K. Roberts, '53bus, New York City, is serving with the Army's X Corps in Korea. Roberts is an observer in the 300th Armored Field Artillery Battalion.

Stanley Wong, '53eng, is an engineer working on a "Slim Hole Rig" with New Superior Oils of Canada Limited at Camrose, Alberta, Canada.

Ensign Donald C. White, '53bus, Winfield, Kansas, recently qualified as a carrier pilot after six successful landings aboard the light aircraft carrier, USS Monterey, in the Gulf of Mexico.

Sgt. Jasper V. Arcilesi, '53bfa, is serving with the 1428th Engineering Company and is stationed in Prince, West Virginia.

George D. Conley, '53eng, has moved from Chattanooga, Tennessee, and is living at 1024 Olive Street, Florence, Alabama.

Lt. Claude S. Jackson, '53bus, Abernathy, Texas, has been assigned to Camp Pendleton, California, after having completed the five-month basic training course at the Marine Corps School at Quantico, Virginia.

Portrait of an Engineer

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cultivating this crop that James made his best money as a boy: \$1 a day for twelve or fourteen hours work. Good for a youngster.

James continued in this life until after his junior year in high school, when his father eyed the southwest, heard prosperity's call and gathered the family together for a conference. It was agreed they would sell the farm, pack stock and belongings together and hit the rails for Oklahoma.

And come to Oklahoma they did—cows, equipment, household goods and all—aboard the train. The elder James located a half-section about 10 miles east of Oklahoma City, and there they settled.

To the 17-year-old James, this new country appeared much different from the fertile farmland of central Illinois, where you could push a dry stick into the ground and come back the next day to count leaves. Oklahoma looked dry and red and dusty. But as the dust here gets into everything,

it made its way into the Illinoisan's heart, and he stayed.

Immediately upon settling the family was hit by two drouth years, so that when James graduated from high school, there were few prospects for college. But the boy wanted to be an engineer, and there was no way to enter the field without more education. His father was a natural as a tinkerer and builder and could handle the complicated problems of high arithmetic. The father regretted that he could not have been an engineer, and the son was not going to hold the same regrets. So, taking determination as about his only possession, the young James got a job with the railway mail service. After four years he felt he had enough of a stake to see him through college and he entered O.U.

During his student years—since money for him was not in the Stutz Bearcat class—he did drafting for counties and private engineering organizations, producing city



R. V. JAMES, chairman of the School of General Engineering, looks over his white-face cattle on a visit to his farm east of Norman. James who bought his first parcel in the 1940's, now owns more than 400 acres, much of it fertile river-bottom land, the remainder "blackjack."

street maps, road surveys and profiles. Characteristically, he never washed dishes, but at the end of the school year he would return to farming, twice following the wheat harvests near Yukon.

"There was one summer," James commented, "when I went more than 100 nights without sleeping in a bed," adding that he had bunked under the equipment where it stopped.

Those were long days, but in 1918 he was graduated with a BS in Civil Engineering. The first great war was under way then, and commissioned as an engineer officer, James was shipped to France. As a second lieutenant, he directed a crew in building railroads and repairing war-blasted roads.

Returning to the United States in June of 1919, he married Ethel Ernst, '16ba, daughter of a farmer in Cherokee. They have two children, Richard Ernst, '42eng, '48m.eng, who has followed his father into engineering and now works with the Honolulu Oil Co. in Brownfield, Texas, and a daughter, Rhoda Jane, '48bus, who married a geologist, Benjamin C. Singleton, Jr., of Wichita, Kansas.

And in 1920 he joined the faculty as an assistant professor. After a semester he was transferred to the Department of Mechanical Engineering, where, except for a few brief visits into other sections, he has spent the last 34 years.

Continuing his studies while teaching here, he received his masters degree in theoretical and applied mechanics in 1928 from the University of Illinois. In 1937 he was promoted to acting chairman of mechanics, the following year receiving his full professorship and the position as permanent chairman of the school.

Before and since James has not limited his devotion to departmental work. He was for 11 years in charge of enrolment procedures for the Engine School; during the second World War, he was co-ordina-

tor of civilian flight training, supervising a ground school as well as flying instruction, producing more than 150 pilots of light aircraft. At the same time he managed a U.S. Office of Education program for the state which provided some 10 communities with engineering and scientific training.

If this were not enough, he had charge of co-ordinating V-12 and several other service education training sessions at the University. But perhaps the most notable service he has performed for the state was his 10-year tenure on the State Board of Registration for Professional Engineers, the licensing body for Oklahoma engineers. For two years he served as chairman of that group.

This pictures the past and the present. So where does the 61-year-old professor-engineer go from here? He goes to work.

Seeing retirement not too far from his doorstep, James in 1940 bought a farm, 160 acres. Since then he has built his holdings to include two houses on some 500 acres in the blackjack country east of Norman. James, who calls himself a modified windshield farmer, one who lives in town but operates farms, occasionally driving a tractor or truck, runs about 100 head of whiteface cattle on part of the land and raises alfalfa and corn on the rest.

And, although he talks little about it, his associates declare that it is a "most successful venture."

One man who knows James well—Dean W. H. Carson of the College of Engineering—said of him:

"He is as conscientious a person as I have ever seen as a teacher and administrator.

"He is a patient, thorough teacher. He uses his rich experience in practice as a professor of engineering, and when I ask him to take on a difficult assignment, he will work nights and weekends until it is done—and it always is completed in a satisfactory manner."

Take on a job, do it well: portrait of an engineer.

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