

# Under Cover

By DAVID BURR, '52ba

**W**HAT IMPRESSIONS of the University of Oklahoma and your days here still linger in your mind? If you were asked to rank one memory ahead of all others, which would you list first?

Would your choice be a poor impression? Perhaps there was a University rule that seemed senseless to you, and so you broke it and paid the price with righteous indignation. Perhaps a faculty member ignored your basic student rights and made you question the capabilities of all professors. Perhaps a social condition existed that found you wanting to be a participant but unable to pay the price.

Or would your choice be a good impression? Perhaps you met your wife or husband here and have the still-bright memories of courtship. Perhaps you grew up at O.U. in an atmosphere designed especially for the growing up and remember the place where juvenility gave way to maturity. Perhaps you met a teacher here who fitted your conception of what a teacher should be—a man or woman of such strength that your life will always reflect the part they played.

I have many impressions of my student days. Many of them still wait for a proper perspective since the time was such a little while ago. But one impression gets stronger and stronger, and I'm sure it would head my list of things that made the greatest and most lasting impression. And that impression was created by a teacher.

It seems wrong to call her a professor. The words mean roughly the same thing, but "professor" always conjures up in my mind a stuffy personality, slightly removed from the fun and foibles of human existence. "Teacher" seems to place the individual on a more human, if more dedicated, plane.

So she was and is a teacher. Let me tell you how I was introduced to her. It was in a class that was required for a journalism degree—a class that was particularly distasteful to me since I had no option or opinion in the matter of taking it or leaving it alone. I was determined to serve my sentence and hoped I would be paroled when the semester was over.

On the first day of class, I placed the teacher on sufferance. After all, she taught the hated course. But as the days went by, my opinion inched away from its original

course. She met daily crisis after crisis with firmness and a strange mixture of gentility. No question was "stupid." If we didn't understand, there was plenty of time to explain. She had no sarcasm in her makeup.

Some took advantage of her kindness and I suspect she knew it. Yet she made no mention of the fact. Only once did I see her angry and that one time she pressed her lips tightly together, as if to say, "Words, I dare you to burst out."

Before the semester was over, she had succeeded in seeing me through the course, a task most teachers would have found beyond their talents. And it was not easy for her.

During the course I was living through a personal crisis of my own—one that demanded my absence from class to the point of embarrassment for both teacher and pupil. Later, after the course was completed and the apple-polishing taunt could no longer apply, I asked her what her reaction to my absences was. "David, I've always known," she said, "that students occasionally give false excuses. But I always give the student the benefit of the doubt. I would rather be wrong in nine instances by accepting the excuse than wrong in the one that really matters."

Still later, over a cup of coffee, I listened to a part of her philosophy. Though I had heard it from others, I don't believe I ever heard it from a person who lived it as thoroughly as she does. "I believe we have to take people in two different ways," she said. "You can't close your eyes to the actions of an individual but if you believe as I do that God created man in His own image and likeness then you will find little difficulty in seeing quite a bit of good in everybody. I'll admit it isn't always easy to remember that."

The teacher is now becoming old in the sense of years. Yet she is one of the most youthful people I know in the sense of intellect. She has never fallen behind the times she lives in and never will. Perhaps that is her special intellectual accomplishment—that the years have left her unmarked in mental outlook, merely increased her wisdom.

Here is a woman who has humility and would deny that she has reason to be anything but humble.

She has confidence in the individual and

would be dismayed to discover the minority she represents.

She has faith in the world she lives in and seriously questions why others do not always share her faith.

She is tolerant of mistakes but indignant with injustice.

She has within her makeup greatness.

In many ways she reminds me of the great teachers of fiction and verse who saw that the human spirit needed as much attention and encouragement in the classroom as the intellect and administered fairly and impartially to both.

She is still teaching at the University. And since it is not my intent to eulogize one single teacher at the expense of many other fine ones, I shall not mention her name. You probably recognized her anyway. She was that fine teacher you had in English or economics or history. She was the gentle soul with fire that saw you through mathematics, psychology or French. You know her by a different name but she is the same teacher as long as she brought to the classroom an understanding heart, an intellectual challenge, and a spirit of such intensity that it still illumines your way occasionally. You know her.

## Courtroom Campaign Underway

A campaign to raise \$35,000 for a Model Courtroom for the University of Oklahoma's Law College is underway.

Stating the need for a Model Courtroom, Hicks Epton, '32Law, past president of the Oklahoma Bar Association, said:

"About the nicest thing which can be said about the trial courtroom at Oklahoma University is that it is a disgrace to the legal profession in Oklahoma. This Courtroom, now in use, was completed in 1913 and except for normal deterioration, remains unchanged. The lighting is inadequate, the acoustics terrible, the seating uncomfortable — and the whole gives the impression of carelessness and neglected abandon."

Thus far, nearly \$12,000 has been contributed by individuals, firms and corporations. All alumni are invited to participate in the Model Courtroom program. Contributions of any size will help.

Gifts should be sent to the University of Oklahoma Foundation, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma. Gifts are tax deductible.