



Joan Emerson listens attentively as husband Tom explains his collection of "bugs." Insects are more than hobby; they're required study in his major.

## The Good Life of a Football Wife

The author, wife of tackle Tom Emerson, relates the life and times of a wife who has a football player as a husband. Married in time for a Miami honeymoon in '55, her story covers one of the most successful periods in the history of Sooner football.

By JOAN EMERSON

**T**O WALK into our apartment you would have to wade through an array of insects and spiders to sit down, and to find Tom you would have to break down the barrier in our back bedroom, then attempt conversation.

I guess to some, sharing your home with bugs wouldn't be desirable, but these are dead, at least most of them are. Collecting and mounting bugs was Tom's hobby before college, and now entomology is his major.

This collection has a two-fold purpose: it's required and interesting. We have a Black Widow under observation and a tarantula, a pet, which Dr. Cluff Hopla gave Tom when we beat Notre Dame.

These are better to live with than the alligator family he wanted last spring.

Coming to visit us isn't exactly a tea party, though, and it's hard to tell who else might be there. Particularly on home game weekends. As a rule it is a mad house. One weekend in particular (North Carolina) we had several people staying all night Friday and Saturday plus our parents who were staying at a motel, bless their hearts! By Sunday night we're both so worn out we haven't the energy to move.

Actually, our younger brothers suffer more from the weekends than we do. They draw the divan to sleep on. Both are good-sized boys and the furniture suffers. Dean

Emerson is as big as Tom and plays better football now than Tom did his senior year in high school.

### A SLIGHT MISUNDERSTANDING

If we had a phone (can't afford one) it would be ringing constantly like everyone else's does. Funny how so many people have the misconception the boys are given large amounts of tickets and "just know you can get some for us, all we need are 10 right together, and on the 50 if it is not too much trouble."

Then there are other people who go out of their way to be nice to you. Before the Texas game this year, Barbara DePue (Mrs. Dale) and I were searching the fair grounds frantically and futilely for ice for

our canteen to take to the game. Dr. Waldo Stevens, Oklahoma City, came to our rescue.

Tom's love for bugs and football isn't any more an idiosyncrasy than Ed Gray's painting. Recently he has been painting horses and houses for Peggy (his bride of four months) to put in their living room. He's really proud of them and the coloring is excellent.

Lots of people think the boys aren't interested in anything other than football, but had they seen us at the Homecoming dance they would have thought differently. Peggy and I had fun attempting to teach the boys Latin American dances. Some bystander might have gotten the idea the boys weren't machines after all.

#### FAIR WEATHER FANS

"I sure was disappointed in the game today, Tom." "What happened to you boys today, just get tired? "Weren't you up for the game?" These were only three of the "nicer" comments O. U. students greeted the boys with after the University of Kansas scored 12 points October 20.

Approximately ten people met the plane in Oklahoma City following that game. They were the players' wives and girl friends. With the plane landing at Will Rogers air field, few persons from Norman were interested in driving up to meet the team.

Of course, it is only a wife's opinion and, I'll admit, a biased one, but I can't help thinking if we had lost the game there would have been no "Sure sorry about the game." "Tough luck, but it'll relieve the pressure." Students and alumni are both so used to winning *they* feel let down if we do poorly or in this case get scored upon.

#### FIRST COME THE CRUTCHES

As the plane came to a stop and the stewardess opened the door, a pair of crutches was the first object visible. From the distance between the gate and the plane, the boy standing in the doorway wasn't distinguishable.

We all stood there trying to see who the boy was, our hearts in our throats. After what seemed hours the boys started down the stairs, one by one. We breathed a sigh of relief when the crutches turned out to belong to Wayne Greenlee. He'd been on them since the North Carolina game four weeks prior.

Meeting the plane is always filled with mixed emotions. When we played North Carolina there, last season, the plane was due in about 8:30 p.m. It was raining. KNOR announced about 8:15 it would be late. We sat and gossiped. Plane reported to be still later. We went out to get something to eat. Plane due definitely at 1:30

a.m. Still raining. Everyone went to Max Westheimer field since most eating places were now closed. At 1:45 there was still no plane. Tension was getting tight as the thought of a crash ran through a few girls' minds.

Every few minutes someone would hear a plane and run outside to see it. Even trains sounded like planes.

About 3:30 a.m. Dot Ballard (Mrs. Hugh) started to call Will Rogers to check for any information, when one of the coaches called from there requesting the drivers to bring the buses to the Oklahoma City airport. Rain and a casual dinner in Durham, North Carolina, caused the plane to be delayed so long.

We all breathed a sigh of relief and started for Jeff house to continue our vigil. We couldn't give up now! They were surprised to see us huddled together in a waiting party but Tom said later, "After that rough trip you've never looked so good."

I can't help worrying every time the plane takes off and feel relieved when it lands again in Norman.

#### A TASTE FOR TRAVEL

The wives got a taste of how it feels to be met after a game following the Notre Dame game. We were fortunate enough to make the trip by train. The athletic office sponsors one trip a season for us. The boys were back in Norman before we got back to Chicago from South Bend, though.

Our schedule gave them their one weekend a year to themselves. Somehow we always take the long trips and get back late on Sunday. We think it's a plot between Ken Farris, athletic business manager, and our husbands.

The trip was a treat. Wayne Greenlee escorted his wife, Dixie, Barbara Holland (Mrs. Lonnie), Dot Ballard (Mrs. Hugh) and myself. We got a big kick out of Wayne having four wives. "Put the checks on my bill," Wayne told one waitress, "for my wives." She looked rather confused.

For the many students and alumni who made the trip, the game must have inspired them a little. Spirit is a tradition at South Bend. The crowd, not just the students, but also the adults, cheered the entire game, even when they were behind, 40-0.

#### SPIRIT VS. COURTESY

The Irish may have spirit and be behind their team, but they could take a lesson in courtesy from the Sooners. Barbara Holland and I started on the field after the game when an attendant grabbed us and said, "Where do you think you're going?"

"Our husbands are out there," we said.

"I don't care who you are, get back in the stands"; he emphasized his orders with a shove that was something short of gentle.

We were shocked by his attitude. We learned later that it was the policy of the school to allow no one on the field, but we couldn't help thinking that the good will previously created could have been extended by an explanation rather than the tough guy act.

#### FUN WITH THE SPOOKS

Being the wife of a player is lots of fun. On Halloween, a group of little "spooks" knocked at our door. "Trick or treat!" they shouted. We treated and they left, but I could hear them at the door:

"Do you know who that was?"

"That was Tom Emerson, I saw his trophy."

We laughed, but pretty soon they knocked again and the spokesman said, "If you'll give us your autograph, we'll give back your candy." Tom was embarrassed, but obliged, and we sent them on to Ed Gray's and Hugh Ballard's. They liked the trophy and wanted to see the others.

#### HONEYMOON IN MIAMI

"Football Wives, Inc." has six members this season, but I joined the club a year ago, December 24, 1955. The trip to the Orange Bowl was a part of my honeymoon.

One of the finest events of the trip was meeting Coach Wilkinson. As busy as he was with photographers and reporters, he had time to be congenial with everyone, even a nervous bride of two days.

The wives had a great time in Miami, but the night before the big game we were all feeling pretty sorry for ourselves. All the excitement and anticipation of the game was being celebrated with an outlandish display of enthusiasm by every fan, but the wives were left in their hotel rooms. It was no time for the husbands to be "out-on-the-town." They had gone with the rest of the squad to team quarters to spend the night, and we were left out of all the pre-game celebrating.

About the time we were sure we were the forgotten ones, some of the squad members who were not scheduled to play the next day came by. They had rented a car and took us to North Miami where the band was staying. That's the kind of sweet guys that play for Oklahoma.

#### THE LION IN HIS CAGE

It's only human nature to remember the best part of any event, but the wives remember how difficult the days were before that plane left for Miami. With finals coming up shortly after the holidays, tempers and time were growing short. Practicing every day of the week and playing a game on Saturdays doesn't leave much time for studies.

Continued on page 29

with the Army at Fort Belvoir, Virginia. He is chief of the combat construction branch of the engineer test unit there.

Lieut. Robert R. Sullivan, '55med, Carnegie, recently completed the Army Medical Service School's military orientation course at Fort Sam Houston, Texas.

Sam Tannebaum, '55bus, recently has become a certified public accountant and now is associated with Alford, Meroney and Company, Dallas, Texas.

Dr. Charles A. Rockwood, Jr., '56med, Oklahoma City, is now interning at Gorgas Hospital, Panama Canal Zone.

Lieut. Billy C. Pyle, '56ba, Norman, has completed the military police officer basic course at Fort Gordon, Georgia.

Lieut. Lester H. Dacus, '56ba, Oklahoma City, has been assigned to the Army's medical service school at Fort Sam Houston, Texas. He is assistant chief of the school's schedules branch.

Lieuts. Jerry S. Parker, '56bus, Davis; Stewart E. Meyers, Jr., '56bus, Oklahoma City, and James T. Weeks, '56journ, Muskogee, were graduated recently from a field artillery officers basic course at Fort Sill, Lawton.

Ira F. Brown, '56bs, Healdton, and Jerry D. Kennedy, '56eng, Oklahoma City, are continuing their educations as recipients of advanced study awards made to them by Lockheed Missile Systems Division. Brown attends Stanford University, while Kennedy is a student at the University of California, Berkeley. Both work part time for Lockheed.

Dale G. Shellhorn, '56bs, has been awarded a master of science fellowship enabling him to continue his education while employed parttime at Hughes Aircraft Company in Culver City, California. He was one of 200 students studying in Los Angeles to receive the Hughes grant.

Joe M. Nelson, '56eng, Shawnee, and J. L. Skinner, '56eng, Bartlesville, both O. U. graduate students, won fellowships totaling \$3,200 in October. Nelson received the W. A. Schleuter \$1,000 grant, while Skinner won a \$2,200 Celanese Corporation award.

### Peddlers of Delusion . . .

Continued from page 21

the subject deftly by telling me that she had just completed a summer school course at Greeley, Colo., in advanced methods of teaching geography!

This summer the Phoenix school board said it would no longer hire graduates of teachers colleges to teach liberal arts subjects, that it would seek, instead, masters or doctors from liberal arts colleges. Phoenix, as one board member put it, was getting tired of teachers who returned each year to teachers colleges piling up academic credits learning more and more about less and less until their students understood their fields of instruction better than they did . . .

I would merely leave you with two thoughts. If you want to meet your challenges, if you want to bring about the brave new world of better instruction on which the survival of the nation may depend, there are two things in which you must not fail.

1. You must press for the introduction of teaching methods, however unusual or unconventional, that will utilize the latest devices of science to make instruction more dramatic, more impressive, and clearer to our children. This should be our criterion. Let us grab that which teaches more effectively. Let us boldly seize the method that permits instruction to be more eagerly received and more readily retained.

2. You must throw your influence toward the return to some basic integrity in our teaching theory. Let's quit coddling the weak and lazy and stifling the smart and industrious. Let us grade both teachers and students on what they can accomplish in comparison to what others can accomplish. While we give due understanding to the slow, let us put spurs to the fast. For that school that conceals the fact that the world holds vastly different rewards for the fumblees and for the catchers is no school at all. It is a peddler of delusion.

### The Happy Life . . .

Continued from page 19

The closer the time came to leave for the Orange Bowl, the harder certain people were to please. The wives agree they wouldn't trade places with their husbands, but we would like to trade places with someone as the pressure begins to build. If no calendar was present, we could still recognize the approach of a game.

Have you ever seen a lion pace in his cage; refuse to eat; toss and turn at night, and wake up to a new day hating just about everyone? That's not just one individual, it's typical of most of the players.

We couldn't trade our husbands in on a new model now, though. They've spoiled us so no one else could stand to live with us.

And, besides, we're rather fond of them, anyway.

### Help for People Who Try . . .

Continued from page 15

way through high school, urging him toward a degree.

"I've been the guy they say 'Go to college and get an education' to," Ted said. "They didn't get the opportunity."

Ted is considering the idea of medical school. It will be a long and hard road, harder than this first year when his scholarship has enabled him "to settle down to the routine before I get a part-time job." But he has few doubts about staying on. He keeps thinking of a good friend who went to college last year, then gave it all up in a surprisingly short time and dropped out. Ted was shocked, because his friend had the reputation of being able to stick out just

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