

Tribute for a Good Man

The "Good Shepherd" of the Petroleum Engineering School was remembered by his former students in a practical way, with a surprise gift in October.

By PERRY ROBINSON



W. F. "JUDGE" CLOUD
... His Students Remembered His Contributions

A GOOD MAN was honored late in October at the University. For an hour, the vast network of O.U.'s petroleum engineers spread around the world sent thoughts, money and gratitude to the man who helped build their school to a position of pre-eminence in the oil world and most of all, a man who was genuinely interested in each of the 2,000 graduates of his school.

Recipient of these gifts was Professor Wilbur F. "Judge" Cloud, '25bs, '26ms, grand old man and guiding spirit of O.U.'s top-ranked Petroleum Engineering School.

The surprise event took precedence over the usual Thursday night Petroleum Engineers' Club meeting, which is sponsored by Cloud. An appreciation plaque, a book of more than 100 letters from students and a cash gift of \$3,700 were presented following a spontaneous movement among alumni.

Such a movement is unusual, and indicates the esteem in which he is held.

It was no small matter to contact the members of a disbanded academic group and no small indication of devotion that caused 2,000 men to give money, time and thought.

On first meeting the man who has inspired such gratitude, one would expect to see an extremely warm-hearted person, a complete extrovert dedicated to helping young engineers through the scholastic barriers.

Judge Cloud doesn't fit this picture. At first he seems dignified, austere and somewhat preoccupied. One leaps to the supposition that 30 years of teaching have left the small, square-jawed man behind the desk necessarily impersonal. After all, he teaches classes, grades papers by the hundreds and acts as an advisor to 75 students, in addition to answering to the responsibilities that his position as a nationally known expert on oil production and petroleum inevitably incur.

But as the minutes slip by and his low,

halting voice continues, a new figure emerges. Judge Cloud is first and foremost a petroleum engineer, and an efficient one. He is not adept at impressive speech or concerned with making people think he is anything more than a man doing a job.

Professor E. F. Dawson, chairman of the School of Mechanical Engineering and colleague of Cloud's since 1927, described him this way. "He's a good stable citizen and a good engineer. He sticks with his job and does it." In essence, those two sentences define Cloud's life.

He was born on a farm in Pinckneyville, Illinois, on May 31, 1895. As the century turned, his father died. The death of his father was to play an important part in his later decision to teach. Mary Catherine Cloud, his mother, taught school in Pinckneyville until 1912, when she and Wilbur, now 17, moved to Lone Wolf, a small com-

Continued on page 30

about anything. Ted was sorry, too, because he feels that nowadays a man absolutely needs a college education. So he remembers his friend and wears the incident like a warning to himself.

George Hazelrigg is another of the 20 students attending O.U. this year with the backing of A.D.F. scholarships. Like the others, he finds the scholarship a key which opens the first and most narrow door through which he must pass toward high education; during this introductory semester he's finding himself able to adapt and form study patterns without the hindrance of money worries. Later it will be easier

for him to handle both school and a job simultaneously. George has already faced the fact that he will have to work to help support himself at college.

"I'd have been able to come to school in any case, I suppose," he said the other day, "but the scholarship helps an awfully lot—an awfully lot."

A Norman resident, George is quiet and has a quick smile which seems to dart out from behind a usually sober expression. A good student, he was pulling straight A's in his high school classes last year, and he was engrossed in math and science. Definitely college material, he hadn't quite

made up his mind to set his sights in that direction.

Then he received some explanatory material from the office of Dr. Carl Moore, chairman of the School of Geological Engineering at O.U. Going through it, he found a whole new world suggesting itself, and one that he liked. He made his decision, applied for and won the help he needed and dived into college.

Today George is carrying seventeen credit hours, plus labs, in his first semester. It's a heavy load for a freshman, but then he knew his curriculum would be anything but a breeze. He seldom finds the time to think of other paths, the ones he didn't take, or where they might have led him. He's on his way to a future.

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Continued from page 22

munity in southwestern Oklahoma, where her brother lived.

At 17, Wilbur Cloud had no inkling of the fact that he would help mould the world's largest petroleum engineering school. He had no special ambition and when an opportunity appeared to teach in the Lone Wolf grade school, he accepted. Oklahoma was an infant state and one needed only a third grade certificate to teach. After two years at Lone Wolf, Cloud resigned to accept a position as grade school principal at Hobart.

The picture of a 19-year-old boy acting as grade school principal contrasts as vividly with education administration today as a young Oklahoma compares with the industrialization and urbanization of modern Oklahoma.

IN THE SUMMER of 1916, he made his first contact with the oil industry, one which decided one aspect of his career. World War I was hovering around the corner and Cloud was expecting the draft. He resigned his job at Hobart and from 1917 to 1920, except for a short term of duty as a private in the Army, he worked in Texas and Oklahoma oil fields as a tool dresser, ditch-digger, swamper, roughneck and roustabout, gaining the foundation of solid practical experience that has aided him throughout his 30 years as a teacher.

The oil industry fascinated him. He saved enough money to enrol at O.U. in the fall of 1920 to study geology. When school started that fall, only two universities in the United States were able to present a petroleum engineering curriculum, the University of Pittsburgh and the University of California.

Cloud lasted two years before his financial condition forced him to withdraw and recoup by taking a job as high school principal at Paden, Oklahoma, for two years. In 1924 Professor H. C. George organized O.U.'s petroleum engineering school, and Cloud enrolled and later received his B.S. in 1925. So began an association that has benefited all concerned.

In 1926 he received his master's degree and accepted a position as instructor, ending his vocational dualism in a combination of his two loves, oil industry and teaching. Today, one could hardly imagine a young man who switched from the white shirt of the gradeschool classroom to the grease and backbreaking labor of an oilfield roustabout.

Another contrast: engineers of this decade step from the graduation platform and President Cross' handshake to a comfortable \$450 per month job with a large oil company. The last thought in their minds is teaching, when more money and chances for advancement are possible in industry.

But in 1926, petroleum engineers were being paid 83 cents an hour and a teacher's slot was attractive to young Mr. Cloud. Another factor in the background influencing his decision was his early entrance into the teaching ranks; still more important was the fact that his mother, who was living in Norman, was virtually alone except for her son. According to Judge Cloud, this, more than any humanitarian urge, has dictated his decision to remain in the teaching ranks when he could make much more money in industry.

SINCE THAT YEAR, 1926, Cloud's ambition and career have been geared to the steady improvement of the Petroleum Engineering School and the endless process of producing capable young engineers. In one perspective, he stands at the mainspring of a university's academic growth; from a larger viewpoint, he is symbolic of the hard core of brilliant, practical planners and builders who have constructed an America of constant progress and immense industrial advancement. Judge Cloud is a man of logical precision, performing a selected task as efficiently as possible.

One senses a certain hardness, an engineer's dedication to fact, or perhaps a distrust for anything irrational in a society where efficiency is the key word, the must for everyone in every job.

Cloud, who was given the nickname Judge for his participation as an expert witness in so many petroleum disputes, has not stagnated behind the brick walls of Felgar Hall. In 1933 he noticed the lack of a

satisfactory textbook on production and began a book on the subject. The same year he noticed Pearle Barnard McCurry, a North Carolina girl, working in an Oklahoma City doctor's office. They were married and have two sons, Danny, 17, and Howard, 15. In 1937 his 600-page book, *Petroleum Production*, was published by the University of Oklahoma Press. The work, which has sold 5,800 times, was adopted by most universities in the nation and immediately established the former roustabout and grade school teacher as a world authority in oil production. As a consequence, the O.U. Petroleum Engineering School was shoved up several notches on the prestige ladder.

Between 1926 and 1930 he served as a safety engineer for the Marland Oil Company and worked for the Oklahoma Geological Survey; since 1930 he has performed part-time consulting work for several sources, served as an expert witness in several law suits and was a consultant for the United States Navy in the summer of 1942. In 1938 he was recognized by *Who's Who in America* and was regarded as a leading authority on production and petroleum law.

In addition to these activities, he has conducted research in several technical fields, is a member of the publications committee for the *Oklahoma Professional Engineer*, a member of the steering committee of the American Institute of Mining Engineers and the faculty sponsor for the Petroleum Engineers' Club.

The latter responsibility was given him in 1942 and has become one of his favorite projects. In relation to the other engineering departments, he is intensely partisan and has been known to make his feelings evident when the petroleum engineers fail to finish on top in inter-school competition.

His activity in this field of student operation is indicative of another one of his qualities which has earned the respect of all engineers at O.U. In a university of 10,000, where students are too often merely faces filling a row of seats, Judge Cloud has tried to make each engineer an individual. This, more than any other factor, may be the reason that engineers from Iraq to Venezuela were grateful enough to express their admiration with only the slightest of prompting.

And undoubtedly they remember that Judge Cloud kept a sharp eye focused on their grades and if necessary, became forceful or helpful, as the case demanded, if the grades became low enough to indicate to him that here was a young man faltering on his way to becoming a good engineer.

The room in Felgar Hall, suddenly

hushed by the importance of the situation, filled with young men who depend so much on men like Judge Cloud, was the perfect environment for the giving of his gift. For the past 14 years he has been going to the meetings, advising, steering, guiding young engineers. Through this room had passed the 2,000 engineers and now they all returned, in spirit, to thank the man who has chosen to do his job well, but who has always had time to help others learn their job, whether it means lending them money or going to war with other faculty members.

He was thankful, probably more than one could understand. His thanks are given every day in his classroom. The door opens, a short man with a stern face and compressed lips enters the room and places a book on the desk. He is neat in appearance, gray hair well-groomed, coat buttoned and tie straight. The man standing behind the desk might very well be the \$100,000 a year executive of a large oil company. He begins to speak, slowly, selecting his words with an engineer's propensity for preciseness.

He speaks methodically, ideas choosing their words well in advance. The lecture proceeds at a steady rate, interspersed with a few gestures, maybe an occasional pencil pointed at a student to notify him to recite. As the hour passes, the material under consideration is covered with calculated thoroughness. As Professor Dawson says, "This is the good shepherd of the Petroleum Engineering School."

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