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Hal Muldrow Agency

'28

Insurance of all Kinds

Bonds

117 E. Comanche

Norman

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Sooner Scene

By R. BOYD GUNNING

A QUIET WALK across the deserted campus at O. U. on a mid-August evening creates an intimate feeling for the past. You feel the dignity of the environment that for 65 years has encouraged men and women to work and study. Many brilliant teachers have dedicated their lives to working here with Oklahoma youngsters, thereby perpetuating an environment for learning.

This sounds sentimental and high-flown. It is. A night like this on the campus affects me this way.

Within a few days 12,000 students will bring the place alive. The excitement and rush of a new school year will crowd out thoughts of the past. It is the future that demands the best efforts of all who live on a college campus.

Since Oklahoma is celebrating its Semicentennial Anniversary this year, a little reminiscing is in order. In counting the achievements of the first 50 years, the state must place the University of Oklahoma high on the list.

One of the reasons the University has accomplished so much in 65 years is because of the good fortune of having David Ross Boyd as first president. Dr. Boyd was president from 1892 to 1908. He was a scholar dedicated to the idea of building a university of high standards for the new territory. How well he succeeded is a matter of history. Since it was not my privilege to know Dr. Boyd personally, I have always been curious about him.

When he returned to the campus for the 35th anniversary in 1928, he told of a number of interesting personal experiences in an interview with George Milburn, '30.

Dr. Boyd recalled, "I got off the train in Norman one August afternoon. That was in 1892. As far as I could see, looking to the southwest toward where the university now stands, there was one vast stretch of buffalo grass. Not a tree or shrub broke the interminable monotony of that hardpan desert.

"I could not visualize a treeless university seat. I immediately began making preparations for making a thousand trees grow where none had grown before."

In spite of assurance from local inhabi-

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tants that no trees would grow in this soil. Dr. Boyd secured seeds from a man in Wisconsin, planted them in rows where the administration building now stands, and soon his seedlings were thriving, replanted all over the area. There was still trouble ahead.

Within a year or two the trees were assailed by an army of tree-boring insects. There were no birds in the area which might help control the insects. Dr. Boyd solved this problem by having driftwood logs hauled from the river and set up on the campus to provide nesting places for woodpeckers.

He said later, "Some of the townspeople thought I was crazy, setting up rotten logs around the campus." Although he soon had to get an ordinance passed to protect the woodpeckers, everything worked out fine and most of the trees were still alive 35 years later.

Dr. Boyd also told of another problem: "Norman was a 'shanty' village with some 1,500 inhabitants. There were 15 saloons here running full blast.

"But the saloon dilemma was most completely solved through the cooperation of a saloon keeper," Dr. Boyd recalled.

"He was an Irishman and a gentleman in spite of his calling. I went to him and told him that some of my students who were minors had been getting too much. 'Now here is a list of all the students who are not minors'—there were not more than 15 or 20—'You can sell to them. They are old enough to know what they're doing. But I wish you would not sell to the minors, and I wish you would get all the other saloon-keepers to agree not to sell to minor students.' He agreed to do as I asked and no officer of the law was ever more vigilant in seeing that the law was enforced."

About the people Dr. Boyd said, "Everyone was poor. They lived in dugouts on the barren prairies, establishing through residence titles to their land grants. But when I say they were poor, I do not mean that there were not a great many cultured people among the Sooners. I have seen grand pianos and scholarly books in adobe huts.

"Most of the men were working students. Studying was done by candles and kerosene lights. The fortitude with which early students bore study hall on those hot September and October evenings is almost incomprehensible to a modern student."

Dr. Boyd was a man of patience, persistence and high ideals. His achievements are a part of the rich heritage enjoyed by Sooner students.