

Letters to the Editor

The letter on this page, received in August, reaches back more than 50 years into the University's past. It was considered so interesting and informative that it is printed here practically in its entirety.

The writer, Errett R. Newby, '07 bm, '08ba, Oklahoma City oil and insurance executive, was secretary and registrar of the University soon after his graduation there.

TO SOONER MAGAZINE:
Dear Sir:

The May issue was unusually good. The article "Year of Trouble" (1907) brings back many nostalgic memories. The contrast between the "Year of Trouble" and the situation "50 Years Later" is striking.

The old frame Gymnasium and the second Administration Building were the only buildings on the campus that were in use when I entered O. U. in the fall of 1904. The Administration Building burned just before Christmas in 1907.

In the "Gym," Dr. Hall and John Darling, '06, conducted "gym" classes which every student had to take for two years. Men's classes met Monday, Wednesday and Friday; women's classes met Tuesday and Thursday. Here were the calisthenics, the tumbling, the acrobatics; the smelly locker rooms; the inadequate showers. The building was inadequately heated by stoves. In the winter, vigorous physical exercises supplied most of the warmth.

Here the "Sons of Esau," seniors of 1908, played basketball. Here varsity basketball started. The very limited seating capacity was usually ample to accommodate those who were interested. Here, in a later year, the annual Engineering banquet, a highly formal affair, ended with unmentionable results, due, so it was rumored, to some drops of croton oil put into the wash-boiler full of coffee by a person reputed to be a law student.

In the fall of 1904 the Science Building (now Drama) and the Carnegie Library, pride of the campus (now the Old Education building) were under construction. Chapel was held daily in the upper floor of the Library where President Boyd gave the students many gems of wisdom and much admonition in the ideals of life. One

of his admonitions was, "It is not necessary that you make a living; it is necessary that you make a life." Attendance at chapel was compulsory for all students.

I took Chemistry One under Dr. DeBarr in the new Science Building, then not yet completed. We did not get into the laboratory until after Thanksgiving. I learned one lesson here I have never forgotten.

One experiment called for putting a piece of lead into a beaker and then pouring acid in the liquid until we had a fixed percentage, at which point a chemical reaction would occur. I poured the acid too rapidly and passed the point of reaction without noticing it. Dr. DeBarr looked at the amount of liquid I had in the beaker and said, "Enough is enough; any more is too much."

The University's first building, which stood near the present Holmberg Auditorium, burned near the end of the year 1903. The second Administration Building stood where the present Administration Building stands. It was in use when I entered the University in 1904. I remember well the fire which destroyed it Christmas week of 1907.

This building had a huge dome like a state capitol. Kirby Prickett, superintendent of buildings and grounds, was up in the dome painting the woodwork. It was vacation and the building was not heated. He was heating the paint on a gasoline stove. As I remember it, the paint boiled over, caught fire in the flame, the fire spread rapidly and the entire building was destroyed, only some of the brick outside walls remaining standing.

After this fire, the University's governing board employed Shepley, Rustan and Coolidge, architectural firm of Chicago, and architects for the University of Chicago, to draw plans for the new Administration Building. Having lost two main buildings by fire, the board insisted that the new building must be fireproof.

When the bids came in, a man from Kentucky named Holmboe filed a bid much nower than anyone else. The board called him in and asked him how he could bid so low. He explained that his bid stated that his engineers found that much heavier steel was specified than was necessary; that the board would want to have the changes he had made in steel strengths checked; that

if they found these changes were satisfactory he would be glad to build the building. He got the contract. It was the first job done in Oklahoma by the Holmboe Construction Company.

At the request of the board, these architects prepared a proposed plan for the future development of the campus. They placed the north oval and the south oval and showed the locations for future buildings, also indicating the collegiate Gothic type of architecture and the materials to be used. This plan was unanimously approved by the board, but, sad to say, the next building, which was the Law Building, varied from this plan.

Now we have a miscellany. The greatly increased cost of labor and materials in later years would have made the cost of collegiate Gothic buildings prohibitive for the new State.

In the picture you use, the smokestack of the old Power House appears between the steel being erected for the new Administration Building and the Science Hall; also, the water tower. President Boyd occasionally slipped away from his office to the old Power House to smoke a cigar—a practice frowned upon by some people in those days. In a later year this Power House caught fire and burned. We had acquired an old, well-worn linotype machine with which type was prepared for the University catalog. I rushed in and rescued the "copy" for the new catalog, which I had prepared, and had all the students who appeared carry out the galleys of slugs. Some of the students tried to move the linotype from the building. The printing foreman came up to me and said, "It's too heavy to move. Anyway, if it burns, we will get a new one." And we did. That was the beginning of the University Print Shop.

One thing I cannot account for in this picture is the absence of the class memorial . . . known as "The Spoonholder." Apparently it had not yet been built. It was a circular seat built of concrete. Here many campus dates spent a pleasant hour. Here, it was rumored, proposals of marriage were made and accepted.

(Editor's note: The Spoonholder was given by the Class of 1910. It stands today, a favorite campus landmark, near the head of the North Oval.)

The story of Dr. Jerome Dowd's experience with the badger game is exhilarating. Under him I studied economics and sociology. His sociology teaching was based in part on his five-volume work on *The African Negro*. His description of "the banana

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zone"—where it was so warm that the natives needed but little of clothing or shelter, and when they were hungry all they had to do was to reach up and pull off a few bananas—still produces a feeling of longing in me.

Yes, 1907 was a year of trouble for the University. With the coming of statehood, the University was placed under a new governing board. Some of its most serious troubles did not materialize until June, 1908, when the new governing board summarily removed President Boyd who, as president of the University for 16 years, had accomplished a most excellent record.

Twenty-two others were also removed including some of the strongest men on the faculty, such as Dr. Vernon L. Parrrington, professor of English, who was grabbed up by the University of Washington where he won many honors; Dr. Lawrence W. Cole, professor of philosophy and psychology (my major professor), and Dean Washburn of the Pharmacy School, who were called to the University of Colorado where they served with honor till retirement; and Professor Humphries of the English Department who went to the University of Michigan.

Dean Washburn was a tall man for those days, slender, with long arms and powerful hands. He told me he met Ty Cobb in Chicago, and when he shook hands with him, Cobb raised Washburn's hand and said: "What do you do for a living?" Washburn told him he taught pharmacy. Ty Cobb said: "A \$100,000 hand gone to waste!"

Washburn used to pitch baseball to me. I would stand in front of a barn and he would burn them in. With my catcher's glove I would do the best I could. Some I could not reach; some I could not hold.

Dr. Boyd did many fine things for the University. He insisted on high standards of scholarship and of conduct from faculty and students. One of the finest things he did was to have large numbers of elm trees planted on the campus and on the University Boulevard. This boulevard at that time was a two-lane, unpaved street, with a row of elm trees down the middle and a row on each side. There was a wood sidewalk only on the west side. Later on, when the boulevard was paved, the cost of paving two lanes was deemed prohibitive by the property owners, so the middle row of trees was taken out and one lane of paving laid.

Dr. Boyd's elm trees today are large, well cared for, and are a source of beauty and satisfaction. In your picture they look quite small, but you can be sure that even though small, they were a welcome sight on what was otherwise a somewhat barren prairie.

Enough of dreaming! From a small and modest beginning a great University has arisen. It can well be proud of its fine name. Its great presidents, its devoted faculty of capable and forward-looking men and women, have made it an institution of which the state of Oklahoma can well be proud.

I am glad to join with its students, past and present, in saying: "Hail! Alma Mater!"

Sincerely yours,
ERRETT R. NEWBY

THE UNINVITED

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comes—probably around 30 million of them.

Dr. Hood's staff is used to treating 20,000 patients per semester, most of whom are ailing with respiratory diseases.

One event which the staff isn't going to forget came last winter. Scores of students at Cross Center suddenly developed the stomach ache, nausea, headaches. At first food poisoning was suspect. Then, as students poured into the Infirmary, it became apparent that they had been struck by a "lightning" virus, which passed in a matter of hours. Though not really serious, it constituted an emergency at the time, and the Infirmary took care of them.

Virus epidemics are relatively small and are likely to occur often. Flu epidemics are worldwide and can be expected about every quarter-century.

The Asian Flu has struck hardest at small children to this point, but who it will strike in the future is impossible to determine. You may have it when you begin to ache and cough, feel listless, run a temperature, have a sore throat and headaches. Taking care of one's self—i.e., not missing meals or exerting one's self too strenuously—is the best defense. A warm bed and liquids are the best retreat methods, and relapses must be avoided; otherwise, dangerous complications could be brought on.

When O. U. students begin to feel the symptoms this winter, the Student Health Service will be ready to go into action and give them all the help it can.

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