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# Sooner Scene

By R. BOYD GUNNING

AT 3:30 A.M., ON APRIL 16TH, my telephone rang. Stumbling sleepily across the room, I wondered what could be wrong. The call was from Jack Guthrie, assistant manager of the Oklahoma Memorial Union Building, telling me that a major fire was burning in the Union's Will Rogers Room.

By the time I arrived on the scene, a few minutes later, the Norman fire department had the blaze under control; but the smoke was so dense throughout the north wing of the building that it was impossible to tell the extent of the damage except that it was obvious that the cafeteria had been ruined.

The airing-out process and cleaning up began immediately with an efficiency that reminded me of a crack combat unit in operation during wartime.

The fire started in the ceiling area of the northwest corner of the cafeteria. Within 15 to 25 minutes the fire department had arrived and brought the fire under control, confining it to that one area. Even though the cafeteria was a total loss, the water damage was held to a minimum and the smoke damage was confined to the north wing of the building.

Hillyer Freeland, manager of the building, and his crew have done a remarkable job of improvising to maintain service during the hectic days of April and May. Eighteen short courses and special meetings were scheduled for the building during the week of the fire. By noon on the day of the fire, Freeland and his crew were able to serve lunch to 60 people who were attending the annual meeting of the University of Oklahoma Foundation. None of the meetings of the week were cancelled or even moved to another location.

An important milestone in O.U.'s development was reached last month with dedication of the \$2,700,000 addition to the William Bennett Bizzell Memorial Library. The story of this marvelous new facility is described in this issue. Many important people attended the ceremonies, including members of the Frank Phillips, Everett DeGolyer, Harry W. Bass, and William Bennett Bizzell families.

The man with the most memories on this important occasion was Jesse Lee Rader, who served as University librarian from 1908 (when the library consisted of 1,000 books) until 1951. As Mr. Rader wrote, in

the March, 1929, issue of the SOONER MAGAZINE, "The University Library is the crown jewel of the institution; it is of immeasurable significance to both the State of Oklahoma and the entire Southwest."

Last summer, representatives of the alumni associations of the 18 state-supported colleges and universities of Oklahoma met in Oklahoma City to discuss problems of mutual interest. The result of this meeting was the organization of the Alumni Council on Higher Education in Oklahoma. The council has been busy studying the problems confronting these institutions and will make an official report on the findings at the State Capitol on June 7th.

The investigations and activities can be summarized in three points: first, a written survey was prepared, collecting statistical information about the conditions and needs of the institutions; second, committees from the council have visited every campus in the State to see first-hand what the conditions are on these campuses; and third, the council is now producing a film on higher education which will illustrate in a dramatic way the great variety of programs and objectives of these institutions. This has been a serious effort and will help to emphasize both the wide-spread interest which alumni have in higher education and the determination of many people to help do something about solving these critical problems.

On April 30th the council visited the O.U. campus. They were joined for this visit by Governor Gary's Commission on Higher Education, headed by Joe C. Scott, Oklahoma City. Other prominent alumni of O.U. who participated in this visit were: O. T. McCall, Representative Bob Bailey, Senator Fred Harris, Hicks Epton, Rhys Evans, Harry Diamond, Fred Tarman, Milt Phillips, A. B. Imel, Lee Roy West, and John Smith.

At a special meeting of the Alumni Executive Board held on April 26th, I was granted a temporary leave of absence to devote full time to a program of vital importance to the University. During my absence David Burr, a former editor of the SOONER MAGAZINE, will serve as acting alumni secretary. The program in which I will be engaged involves the construction of a high-speed electronic computer based upon a modified design of the Atomic Energy Commission computer at Los Alamos, New Mexico. This computer, when completed, will be one of the fastest, if not *the* fastest digital computer in the world. It will be a tremendous research facility for O.U. and will also be available to help solve complicated problems confronting business and industry of the Southwest.

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