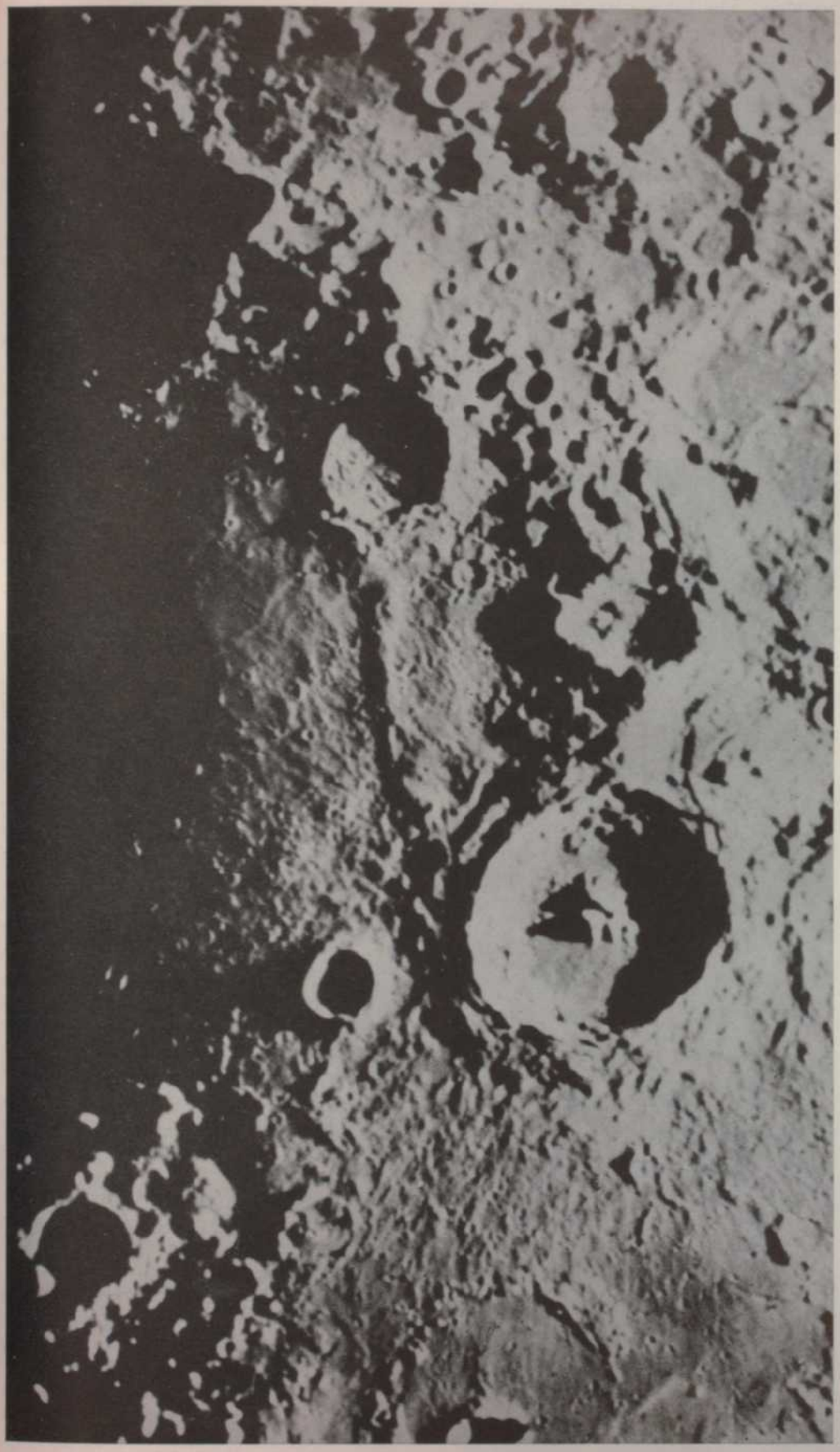
Space travel is not very far away. Perhaps
you will soon be making plans for a strange, delightful . . .

Vacation On The Moon

By BRYCE BRADY



The cold dark meets the hot light side of the moon. The largest crater in photo is Theophilus.

Bryce Brady, '27eng, wrote the following story as a class exercise in the fall of 1926 in the astronomy class of Dr. J. O. Hassler, professor emeritus of astronomy and mathematics. All members of the class had been assigned to write about a "Thirty-day Experience on the Moon." Hassler considered Brady's "experience" so good that he forwarded it to the University of Oklahoma Magazine *for publication, and it was accepted.*

"The method of making the trip," says Hassler today, "and the means of sustaining life on the moon may be classed as science fiction—31 years ahead of our time—but all references to conditions on the moon and all astronomical observations described in the story are according to known physical conditions."

Writer's note: This is the diary of Bill Smith, living in the year 2126, who with his pal Bob Williams has decided to take advantage of some special excursion rates offered by one of the interplanetary transportation companies and to spend his vacation on the moon.

SEPTEMBER 14, 2126. Bob and I watched our departure today from the basement floor windows of the vessel. It was a beautiful sight to watch the skyscrapers and streets and parks shrink so quickly to toy-like dimensions. Although I had often seen from my office window the great spherical vessels from Mars or Venus or the moon drop out of the sky and come to a noiseless landing at the docks, yet I was greatly thrilled at this, my first experience as a passenger.

I believe the most interesting thing that I have observed this afternoon has been my gradual decrease in weight. I first noticed it when we were but a couple of thousand miles from earth. When I arose hurriedly to offer a lady my chair, I was dismayed to find that my alacrity caused me to bound completely off the floor, and it was with difficulty that I regained my balance. I found a penny spring weighing machine in one corner of the billiard room on the fifth floor and discovered that I weighed only 72 pounds, less than half my accustomed weight. By dinner time I weighed only 13 pounds.

A few minutes ago Bob and I went down to the basement for a last look at the earth before retiring to our staterooms. We were now far enough away to see the entire earth through the thick window in the floor. However, the earth's diameter appeared 20 or more times as great as the moon's diameter appears from the earth. We estimated that we must be 50,000 miles away. We turned out the lights in the room and let the silvery "earthlight" stream through the window. The huge white sphere, appearing all the brighter against the dead black sky behind it, showed no markings of land or sea. We marveled at this when a well-read passenger explained that the earth's atmosphere caught and reflected from the sun practically all the light that now reached our eyes. In other words, we were now looking at the outside instead of the inside of what we had always called the sky.

September 15, 2126. After breakfast this morning we took another look at the earth. It stood out bright and clear against a black and starry abyss. Its apparent diameter had shrunk to only half that of last night. While we were busy making guesses as to our distance from the earth and moon we happened to overhear a conversation between a young lady and a vessel official, which amused us greatly.

"But," insisted the young lady, glancing at her wrist watch, "it is now nine o'clock in the morning and yet all the stars are shining."

"My dear young lady," explained the ostentatious official, "you are now out in space between the earth below and the moon and sun above. Here it is always either day or night as you wish to consider it, for you can always see both the sun and the stars."

"Surely," exclaimed the girl in astonishment, "our vessel is not going to land on the bottom side of the moon?"

The official had to turn his face to hide a slight smile, before answering gravely: "It is the same on the moon as on the earth, in that no matter at what part of its surface you may be, you are always on top. After we turn the vessel around in about 24 hours and start settling down on the moon you will have to look up through the roof to see the earth."

During the afternoon a porter came and strapped small magnets to our shoes which kept our feet from sliding on the sheet iron floor when we attempted to walk. At dinner we had a gay time. We had reached the point on our trip where the gravitational effects of the earth beneath and the moon above exactly balanced each other and everything had zero weight. Tables and chairs were placed around on the steel walls, ceiling and floor, all being held lightly thereto by small magnets. Waiters came in walking along the floor, up the wall and across the ceiling to serve their tables. One adventurous young lady, who had evidently been on such trips before, calmly raised her cup of tea and emptied it into mid-air over her plate. She then drank through a straw from the amber sphere hanging motionless before her. After that everyone set to work devising clever thrills. One fellow volunteered to let another place him in mid-air. He squirmed and twisted and kicked, but was unable to change his location an inch until he finally threw his shoe upward and the reaction forced him down to the floor.

Someone discovered that he could propel himself about by using a fan. Before the evening was over almost everyone had ceased walking or even sitting on chairs. We all propelled ourselves about with fans and reclined in mid-air wherever we chose.

September 16, 2126. We landed safely this morning and walked through an air-tight passage-way directly into an air-tight hotel on the western ridge of the great lunar crater Theophilus. I find that I weigh approximately 25 pounds. It has taken us

". . . the great spherical vessels from Mars or Venus or the moon drop out of the sky . . ."

most of the day to make our hotel arrangements and arrange for suits for outside use. The pneumatic suits used on the moon are very ingenious devices, being equipped with small oxygen tanks and heating coils. As it is very cold on the dark side of the moon our suits are finished with a silver-bright surface to prevent our body heat radiating off into space. Our suits thus become thermos bottles, all the surrounding space supplying the vacuum. They also protect us from the intense rays of the sun, absorbing a minimum amount of heat.

September 17, 2126. We ate an early breakfast this morning and then dressed to do some exploring outside the hotel. We passed through a double door arrangement out to the crater-scarred surface of the moon. High overhead the great earth shone down with the brilliance of several moons. The sky was perfectly black and the stars shone with a steadiness not possible through the atmosphere of the earth. We were unable to talk to each other directly, due to the absence of air as a medium of sound. However, when we grasped hands we closed electrical contacts which allowed us to telephone to each other through transmitters and receivers in our helmets.

ALL SIZES OF CRATERS from a few inches in diameter up to several feet and even several miles confronted us. The surface was covered with a fine dust, probably of some meteoric origin. When we kicked it the little clouds of dust unsupported by an atmosphere dropped back to the surface as quickly as though they had been pebbles. The utter deadness of the earth's satellite was brought to our attention when we realized that this very dust under our feet had been there for eons, never disturbed by passing breezes nor tornadoes, never moistened by water nor enriched by vegetation.

Only the stars remained unchanged from the way they appear on the earth. The giant hunter Orion could be seen just above the eastern horizon. . . . We looked for some time before we were able to locate Polaris, the North Star, just above the northern horizon and immediately below Cassiopeia.

As we gazed up from the dark side of the moon at the sunlit side of the earth it was hard to realize that there were men there going about their tasks. Men on the central parts of the sphere eating their noonday meals; men on its western edge reading morning papers as the sun streamed in their breakfast room windows; men on its eastern edge pointing out the new moon to their children as dusk forced them to cease mowing their lawns.

September 18, 2126. Another day of new thrills. I never realized before what slaves we earthmen are to gravitation. Here we skip lightly along taking 15 and 20-foot steps and jumping into and out of depressions 10 and 15 feet deep.

The celestial sphere of stars has rotated over since yesterday an amount equal to about one hour on earth. Orion has risen higher in the sky and Sirius, the brightest of all stars, is peeping up over the eastern horizon. Whereas on earth the stars are all dimmed by the dense atmosphere when they are near the horizon, here they suddenly burst into view above the horizon in all their overhead glory. We spent an interesting hour watching the stars one by one spring into view above the eastern horizon and others as quickly drop from sight as they touch the opposite rim of the crater Theophilus, 64 miles away to the west.

September 19, 2126. The earth stands still! It did not occur to us until today that although all the stars and planets are sweeping across the sky that the earth hangs approximately motionless where we saw it the day we arrived.

September 21, 2126. We decided this morning that we would like to climb the mountain in the center of the crater Theophilus. We procured an air-tight car, rocket propelled, and started out.

The road was exceedingly steep down the precipitous rim of the crater and we were glad when we finally reached the flat floor of the crater 18,000 feet below. Looking back up the rim which we had descended we saw a mountain ridge two and one-half times as high as Pikes Peak on earth rises above its base. We covered the 30 miles to the center in an hour and a half, but decided to sleep a few hours in camp at the foot of the mountain before starting our climb afoot. It really matters very little here in this land of 708-hour days just what hours we sleep, but I think that the closer we follow our accustomed habits the better it will be for us.

September 22, 2126. We had a great time climbing the mountain this morning. Our bodies were so light that we could jump up on rocks 18 feet high as easily as we could jump on to rocks three feet high on earth. However, we often had to stop and rest and it was almost lunch time when we reached the highest peak.

Around us lay a marvelous sight. Fifteen thousand feet below lay the level floor of the crater softly illuminated by silvery earthlight. From a jet sky shone thousands of stars, all of which I knew to be great suns dimmed only by immense distances.

We calculated that sunrise would come

Continued on page 31

THE AUTHOR

Bryce Brady, Oklahoma Gas and Electric Company's senior consulting engineer, is no newcomer to the writing trade. Even before his fictitious account of a moon jaunt was printed by the *University of Oklahoma Magazine* three decades ago, Brady had an article accepted by a national McFadden publication, *Electrical Experimenter;* he sold the article while attending high school in Pawnee.

Since graduation from O. U., Brady estimates he has written approximately 20 articles for professional magazines such as *Electrical Engineering, Electrical World, Electric Light and Power, Electrical South* and *Edison Electric Institute Bulletin.* His ability with words is also put to good use by OG&E, where he has worked continuously since 1923.

Papers which he today prepares—for his company, for district meetings of the American Institute of Electrical Engineers, and for Edison Electric Institute—are necessarily less exotic than his moonshooter article, but they still reflect the erudition that has won Brady a membership in *Who's Who in Engineering.*

For all his perception in the field of space travel, Brady had no idea in 1926 that man might reach the moon within his own lifetime. He recalled that he had first thought of dating the fictitious moon flight for the year 2026, but finally decided on 2126 as the closest approximation for luxury space travel. Recent events have caused him to reconsider. But on one point Brady still is consistent: he has no intention of leaving a wife, four children and four grandchildren, and a home in Oklahoma City to go flying off to the moon—regardless of how soon the service is available.

in Psychology at O. U. Combes is totally blind.

Bryant Moore, also blind, is working on a master's degree and tunes pianos in his spare time to supplement the income both he and his wife, Helen—also blind—receive from the State and Will Rogers funds.

Well-known nationally are two handicapped students who took O. U.'s professional writing courses: Kent Ruth, author of *How to Enjoy Your Western Vacations*, and Bill Gulick, author of many western articles and books—such as *Bend of the Snake*, which was recently made into a movie. Ruth has a curvature handicap and Gulick had polio.

One handicapped Sooner who is not drawing funds from the State or Will Rogers scholarships is Elsa Alexander. She has received assistance from TV's "Queen for a Day" program. One of her friends nominated her for prizes last summer. Elsa, who, like Ruth, has a curvature handicap, was given an electric scooter which she has affectionately named "Herbie." And "Herbie" sets a pace for the sports car set as he makes his daily trek from the Women's Quadrangle to the Business Administration Building where Elsa leaves him to take up her studies in accounting.

An interesting aspect of extracurricular life for handicapped students at O. U. is a service-social group called the Double "O" Club. Founded in 1953, the club takes its name from the double wheels on a wheelchair.

Susie Seymour, a speech therapy major from Bartlesville and a past president of the club, speaks enthusiastically when asked about the activities of the Double "O'ers":

"We have so many projects in mind. We hope to get tape recordings on file in the library of all basic courses offered at O. U. so blind students may use them and not have to hire readers. We're also preparing a braille map of the campus. And we hope to start a variety show with which to build up additional scholarship funds."

As enthusiastic as Susie is another member of the Double "O" Club, B. W. Scott. A junior from Ardmore, Scott is a member of the Varsity "O" Club as well (he is an alternate center for the Big Red team).

"Susie should add that having a handicap is definitely not a pre-requisite for joining Double 'O'," Scott said. "Most of us are just interested in helping handicapped students during their stay at O. U. Some of our members—like Susie—are working on degrees that will enable them to help handicapped students when they graduate."

Scott estimates that only two percent of the Double "O'ers" are handicapped.

Susie agrees. "And we feel that the University is just as interested and sympathetic with our goals as we are."

Because of such enthusiasm, handicapped students are finding their goals easier to reach at the University of Oklahoma. There are ramps as well as steps to a higher education.

VACATION ON MOON

Continued from page 13

soon. We did not wish to be directly exposed to the rays of the rising sun falling perpendicularly on the side of the mountain so we hurried down the mountainside towards the car. Glancing back over my shoulder I could see the gleaming rocky peak glistening in reflected glory. I could all but hear the crackling of the rocks above me as they baked under the rays of a sun untempered by a blanketing atmosphere, and hence more intense than ever shone upon an earth desert at noonday.

Four hours later we reached the car and waited until the sunlight reached us at the foot of the mountain. There was no twilight. The sky was perfectly black as the prominences, the great flaming tongues of the sun appeared above the distant rim of the crater, then the edge of the sun's disc. It was nearly an hour before the lower edge of the disc cleared the horizon, and the sun was started on its 354-hour journey across the sky.

We had a weird trip back through that gleaming downpour of light and heat. Projecting rocks and ledges cast dense black shadows which swallowed up all that entered them. Once we stopped the car and got out to stretch our legs. I stepped into the shadow of a little hillock and was astounded to find it so dark that I couldn't even see where I was going. On earth we grow accustomed to the reflected light from the sky and fail to realize conditions without an atmosphere. As I walked back to the light Bob came running toward me and was relieved to see me step into the sunshine again.

September 30, 2126. An eclipse of the sun! The sun has been mounting higher and higher each day and drawing nearer the earth until today it passed behind. For three hours we were plunged in total darkness except for starlight. All the hotel residents gathered on the glass-covered roof garden of the hotel and watched the phenomenon. The earth loomed four times as great in diameter as the sun. The sun's great flaming prominences 200,000 miles high lingered several minutes after the disc proper had settled behind the earth. We could imagine thousands of people all over this side of the earth running out in their yards to gaze up at an eclipse of the moon just as we gazed up at their earth eclipsing the sun.

October 7, 2126. The sun set today with no more dusk after its edge dropped behind the horizon than there was dawn when it arose 354 hours ago.

We saw a monument this morning which is very emblematic of this dead planet. Chiseled on the side of a stone pillar we read "Weather Prediction." And below it there was a tabulation of the temperature for each hour of the 708-hour day. We thought of the little notations in the upper corners of daily newspapers on earth, giving weather predictions for the next 24 hours. And here on this lifeless dreary sphere someone years ago had set down in stone a permanent weather prediction. He had only to set down the temperature over a 708-hour cycle, for there is no rain, no snow, no high or low barometer, no high or low humidity, no prevailing winds or any of the other variables which keep meteorologists busy on earth.

October 14, 2126. Bob and I decided to lengthen our visit until today in order to witness an eclipse of the earth. But there was no eclipse. The shadow of the moon on the earth was so small that we could barely see it without field glasses. With them it appeared only as a black dot moving swiftly across the face of the planet. We realized that from every point on the earth swept over by that black dot could be seen a total eclipse of the sun.

The earth is again full and the moon must again be new as seen from the earth. The stars have all completed a little more than a complete revolution over us.

Tomorrow we start for home, and after our 48-hour return trip our vacation will be over and we will go back to work in the office.