

Charlie and His Boys

Picture by Merlin A. Dobry, '58ba.

THE trim lawn of 1704 Coventry Lane, Nichols Hills, is hardly similar to the rolling fairways of St. Andrew's Scotland; but they do have this in common—an awful lot of golf is being played on both by people named Coe.

Charles R. (Robert) Coe, a former O.U. business student, is, of course, the St. Andrew's Coe. The Coventry Lane Coes are

three less-well-known figures of the sports world: Chuck, Rick and Ward Coe, who are presently attending Casady and West Nichols Hills schools.

The three youngsters (Chuck is 8, Rick and Ward are 7 and 5 respectively) have nowhere near the international reputation which Charlie Coe, their 34-year-old father, has earned by winning two U. S. National Amateur Championships and by being a player on seven U. S. international teams. But their exuberant application of club to turf on the Coventry Lane "fairways" would make the elder Mr. Coe quake for his title (and his lawn) if he were a jealous man.

Happily, Charlie Coe is a normal-enough father who takes a deep interest and pride in his sons' athletic ambitions.

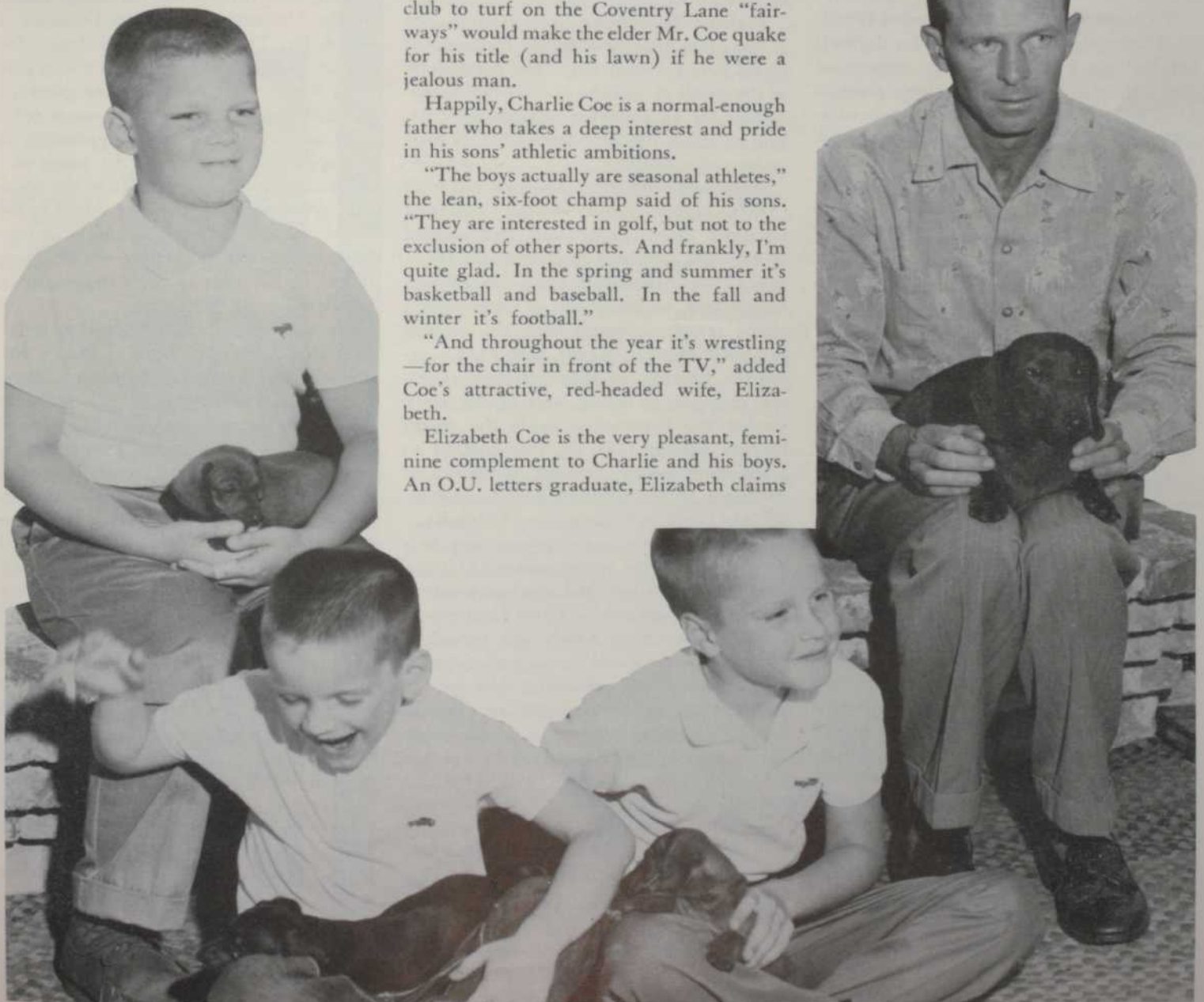
"The boys actually are seasonal athletes," the lean, six-foot champ said of his sons. "They are interested in golf, but not to the exclusion of other sports. And frankly, I'm quite glad. In the spring and summer it's basketball and baseball. In the fall and winter it's football."

"And throughout the year it's wrestling—for the chair in front of the TV," added Coe's attractive, red-headed wife, Elizabeth.

Elizabeth Coe is the very pleasant, feminine complement to Charlie and his boys. An O.U. letters graduate, Elizabeth claims

to have more of a spectator's talent for golf; but as might be imagined, rearing three boys and a golf champion doesn't leave much time for spectator activities. Nevertheless, Elizabeth is active in civic work and

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Charlie and his boys (with Queenie and her pups): Left to right, Chuck, 8, Ward, 5, and Rick, 7. Ward has just been nipped by Pup No. Two.

WORDS WITHOUT MEANING

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or otherwise, presents a 1937 movie, shop-worn though it may be, at least the picture probably has a story. Which is more than most modern movies boast. Even a comforting proportion of its live presentations has been clipped from books and magazines of yesteryear, from a vanished America where such words as subjective value, morals, religion, ethics were not—as now—mere empty cartons, discarded soap boxes for street corner neo-existentialists to kick around. Still more, when TV takes advantage of its unique ability to transmit non-verbal communication right into every living room, to use, that is, gestures, actions and sounds in lieu of words, why it wields there a tremendous weapon.

But unfortunately, when a culture begins to revert from the printed word to manual gesture, from language to sign language, it is taking a great step backward. Monkeys gesticulate. It is the sign of civilization that it communicates with the written word.

Alarming and unmistakable signs of degeneration in our basic communication system have been evident for more than a generation now, beginning, I think, about 1925, when, under the curse of so-called "progressive" education many of our elementary schools switched from the old, proven A, B, ab phonic method of teaching reading, to the new and completely idiotic "word-recognition" system.

Now nothing could be better calculated to make a nation of illiterates than this read-by-rote system which, fortunately for me, I am old enough to have escaped; but which you probably had to endure. As Dr. Rudolf Flesch says in his angry little book, *Why Johnny Can't Read*, it just throws 3,500 years of civilization out the window and goes back to the benighted idea the ancient Egyptians, Babylonians and Chinese had of writing. It ignores the letters and, instead, makes of each word an ideograph, like a Chinese sign or an Egyptian hieroglyphic. These you have to memorize, since you are given no alphabetic key to unlock them and break them down.

By the time you have memorized five or six thousand of these stupid little curlicue signs (which is about the vocabulary of the average literate Chinese) you too are heartily sick of the whole business and turn instead to television, radio, movies, the comic books, or picture magazines for your entertainment and information, letting reading revert to what it was in remote antiquity, the exclusive prerogative of the learned priesthood attending the sacred cows in temple colleges.

Now, rather angrily and unjustly, perhaps, this is what I suspect some of our teachers and professors would like to have happen. It may be unconscious on their part. But the brutal truth remains, they have achieved a nation of non-readers, more and more and more they have herded "literature" into a sort of profane hieroglyphic language which the ordinary American will not read, largely because he can't; they have contributed alarmingly toward an impending Tower of Babel breakdown in our everyday ability to communicate even with each other.

The carrier current of communication is empathy. It is a subjective feeling, a first person quality transmitted by the writer, received by the reader. Without it there is no understanding, no communication, no matter how skilled with words, how admirably objective the transmitter is.

Words without worth (with apologies to Shakespeare) never to heaven go. And that just might have something to do with the accompanying semi-Shakespearean line: And Russian missiles soar, but ours stay down below.

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recently spearheaded the successful Speech and Hearing Clinic development fund drive.

The Coe boys show every sign of growing up to be as active as their parents. Chuck, the eight-year-old, might succeed his dad in the golf department. He recently came in second in the Oklahoma City Golf and Country Club's junior tournament.

Do the boys get any lessons from the National Champion along with their lawn chipping?

"Very little," said Coe. "I enjoy golf, but I wouldn't want to force that enjoyment on them. They all take lessons at the club and they have some special children's clubs. If they like the game, fine; if they don't—that's fine also."

Coe, who won his first National Amateur Championship in 1949 at the age of 25, thinks golf is becoming a young man's game—particularly after having to wrest his second Amateur's from Tommy Aaron, a Georgia college senior.

It's a sentiment the younger Coes agree with completely. Asked if he wanted to grow up to be a champion like his father, Ward's face lighted up in startling contrast to the traditionally solemn expression which his father sports on the fairways: "Sure," he laughed, "I'll be a champ'n, too. It's easy!"

NEW BOOKS

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gotten. And when at last the lips were closed, and the fatal push was given, even the stern executioners of inexorable law felt a tremor run through their stalwart, muscular limbs."

This picture, my friends, has nothing to do with justice. It seems quite obvious to me that the reason lynchings packed them in is an esthetic reason. It would be hard in those Cecil B. DeMille-less days to find a dramatic match for the demise of Seminole. Saturday night is the Devil's own when you've had a bath and there's not a decent movie in town.

Lynchings and the like are done so much better even on TV now that I seriously doubt if today's Coloradan would bother to look out his living room window if a modern Seminole were having the bad luck to be executed prematurely from a nearby elm. It is easy to see how something like that would pass out of fashion.

The Romans had the right idea: I am not at all sure about the bread bit, but there is no question in my mind about the value of a circus. What this world needs is a good nickel movie.

RECOMMENDED: To anyone who enjoys a good lynching—vicariously.

Mathematics in Fun and in Earnest, by Nathan A. Court, Dial Press.

My particular bent is against mathematics. The last time I ever had anything to do with the subject was back in my high school days when my trigonometry teacher proved to everybody's satisfaction that one equals two.

Many a mathematician finds his logic leading him to the land of one equals two, but not many can joke about it. Happily, Dr. Nathan Court, O.U.'s Warsaw-born Professor Emeritus of Mathematics, is a mathematician who, as the title of his new book implies, can work with figures either in fun or in earnest.

There are many facets of this comprehensive book on the history, foibles, and glories of mathematics which recommend it to a general audience; but the most prominent are Doctor Court's lucidity and wit. The book had its origin in Doctor Court's popular lectures, and, to use a phrase which Doctor Court ridicules, "it is obvious that" he still has an audience very much in mind.

RECOMMENDED: An ivory-tower man visits the rest of us in excellent style.