



the amazing Edmondsons live as normally as possible—'at home'

"Jay" Edmondson watches her husband on a Sunday TV debate. Visiting, is W. P. Pruitt, a family friend.

## *A Visit with Jay and J. Howard*

By Carol J. (Robinson), '59

**G**OVERNORS may belong in mansions, but anyone expecting to find J. Howard Edmondson in Tulsa's high-rent district is in for a big surprise.

Home to the forceful governor-elect, Oklahoma's youngest at 33, is a modest one-story bungalow in what might be described as a middle-middle-class neighborhood. A large "Edmondson for Governor" sign nailed to a front yard tree and a boy's bicycle covered with "Big Red E" stickers are the lone evidences of the organized political confusion inside.

A visit to the Edmondsons, a few days before the November 4 election swept the copper-haired O.U. alumnus into the governor's chair, made quite apparent the non-existence of leisurely Sunday afternoons for Oklahoma's man-of-the-hour.

Six-year-old Patty Edmondson answered the door and went tearing through the house in search of her parents. Edmondson had just finished dressing for a television appearance. His wife was on the phone—not for the first time that afternoon, nor the last.

Edmondson, appearing as amiable and at ease as on his campaign telecasts, looked like a promising young businessman in his carefully creased gray suit, dark tie, and black tassel loafers. There was no trace of political pomposity in his manner. He set-

tled back in a plump provincial easy chair and readily answered the questions put to him.

Edmondson, who was sitting in O.U. law classes just ten years ago, is acutely aware that he will be making decisions affecting the future of Oklahoma's higher education in a few short months.

"I am going to do everything possible to get a supplemental appropriation for the university in January," Edmondson answered without hesitation, adding that he had not yet seen a complete breakdown of the figures requested.

But the young politician, recognizing public apathy concerning the educational crisis, also has an eye on the long range problems.

"Many of the professors are just as concerned about the need for physical improvements as with immediate salary increases." Edmondson lighted a cigarette as he told of young faculty members whom he had known who had left O.U. for the better research facilities and more adequate classroom equipment which other universities offered.

This reminded him of a newspaper article and he got up to find the *Tulsa World* as Mrs. Edmondson emerged from the kitchen.

Jeannette Edmondson, an attractive,

alert, former O.U. French instructor and Kappa Alpha Theta with a Master's degree in the unstudied art of being completely herself, is in her own eyes the ideal chief-cook-and-bottle-washer-type wife who was never given any choice in the matter of political skyrocketing.

Jeannette, or "Jay" as she is called by her friends, perched on the edge of the piano bench as she and Edmondson talked enthusiastically of their three law school years at O.U. (1946-48) and of the other '48ers, many of whom were among the original campaign volunteers.

Howard Edmondson, a prank-loving college boy, was limited to the one pre-war year he spent at the Phi Gamma Delta fraternity house. According to his wife, he was too busy catching up and getting into Law School to take much interest in campus activities after the war.

"He had to cram two correspondence courses into the three-week period between semesters to qualify for law school," she recalled, "but he did it."

Asked what was the secret of Phi Gams' political savvy in Oklahoma free-for-alls, (Senators Mike Monroney and Josh Lee were Phi Gams, as well as Edmondson's Republican opponent, Phil Ferguson, and his brother, U.S. Congressman Ed Edmondson), Edmondson laughed and re-



lated that a rumor had been going around that when either he or Ferguson is elected the State's motto will be changed to "Liberty, Equality, and Phi Gamma Delta Fraternity."

"Regretfully, I must, for my part, squelch that rumor," he said, enjoying the joke.

It's hard to imagine a man as spectacularly successful as Edmondson is as not having a definite plan for everything, but he swears that neither he nor his brother started out with politics in mind.

"If they did have all this planned," Mrs. Edmondson volunteered with characteristic dry wit, "they didn't tell me anything about it."

"And if I were to admit planning it now," Edmondson laughed, "Jay would claim we were married under false pretenses."

Edmondson came to the Tulsa county attorney's office as chief prosecutor after his brother, with whom he originally had planned to practice law, was elected to Congress. After being twice elected county attorney himself, Edmondson was only a whirlwind campaign away from the governorship.

"He had gotten to the point in politics," Mrs. Edmondson explained, "where there was nothing else he wanted to do here in the county. Some of his friends wanted him to run for attorney-general this year and for governor in four years."

But Jay favored her husband's decision to make the big race this time and she was soon an experienced campaigner.

"We get weary sometimes when we are gone so much," she admitted. "Home is just a place to drop in for clean clothes."

The phone rang and Mrs. Edmondson went to answer while her husband talked earnestly about attracting young men into state politics. Suddenly, he jumped up to open the door for his brother Ed who had just stepped onto the porch carrying a sack of apple cider vinegar and honey, a home remedy for Edmondson's sinus trouble.

The brothers went into the kitchen while Mrs. Edmondson explained that Ed had been responsible for selecting the Big Red E slogan for Edmondson's campaign.

"Edmondson is a hard name to deal with." She stepped into the next room returning with one of the campaign pins, white styrofoam in the shape of the state of Oklahoma, outlined in red and centered with the Big Red E. "We had a name-selling proposition in some parts of the state, and the slogan combined a sense of pride in Oklahoma and the team spirit of the campaign."

She added dryly that several of her husband's Stillwater supporters had requested that he change to the Big Orange E for his appearances there.

Edmondson was plugging for a place in the runoff during the primary campaign and was as surprised as the political old hands when he led the pack. Mrs. Edmondson theorizes that "enough people were saying he doesn't have a chance in the world, but I'm going to vote for him anyway."

"I never thought he could win those county elections," she admitted as the phone rang again, "but I just knew he could win this one."

The Edmondson brothers returned from the kitchen and paused a moment in front of a mantle picture of themselves taken just after Howard Edmondson's primary victory. After his brother had left for the television studio, Ed Edmondson recalled that his first campaigning experience with "Nugget" (an Ike-like nickname for How-



Eight-year-old Jeanne Edmondson plays in the drive of her soon-to-be vacated home.

ard Edmondson) was during the 1932 election in which their father, the late E. A. Edmondson, became Muskogee county commissioner.

"It's pretty hard to stay in the family and not get involved in politics," Mrs. Edmondson said as she drafted Ed and Patty, who had just come dashing into the house, to pour the coffee she had been brewing between trips to the telephone.

The Edmondsons' oldest daughter, 8-year-old Jeanne, was a bright red blur in her hooded O.U. sweat shirt as she streaked through the room to try a Wilkinson-type tackle on her uncle. Ed Edmondson obliged with a quick spin before leaving for his own telecast in behalf of his Congressional re-election campaign.

"Howard and Ed are worse kids than the seven children," Jay Edmondson remarked. (The Ed Edmondsons have three sons and a daughter.) "One Fourth of July they bought the children water guns and used them themselves. If that wasn't awful!"

Mrs. Edmondson describes her husband as the busy father who spends his limited time at home with the children.

"Neither Howard nor Ed take off and play golf." She pushed her short brown hair into place. "I guess they know we'd kill them if they did in the little time they have at home."

A procession of small boys wandered through the house, none of whom proved to be 11-year-old Jimmy (James Howard Jr.). His mother explained that Jimmy, who has just become a Boy Scout, has been living in his sleeping bag since he took the oath and had been camping out in a friend's back yard the night before.

The children were very conscious of campaign activities, but not unduly impressed. Once when Patty was playing at a neighbor's home she was told "Your daddy's going to be on television."

"Oh," Patty answered with disappointment, "I wanted to watch cartoons."

The Edmondsons know that raising three small children in the glare of the governor's mansion will present its problems. Already they have had to do some serious explaining to the children about the false stories circulated about their father during the hectic primary days, although the Edmondsons feel they came off very well as far as rumors are concerned.

"Children are more sensitive about these things than most people realize," Mrs. Edmondson said, making sure Jeanne and

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## THE CONQUEST OF POVERTY

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tained in the business or savings of investors who can foresee a profit; that profits can only come through increased volume and/or decreased costs per unit; and that decreased cost per unit of production depends primarily upon greater production per worker—not upon static or lesser production per worker!

What all this adds up to, of course, is that the ultimate objectives of both labor and capital are identical. Why cannot this simple truth be indelibly impressed upon our high school youths before they are exposed to the blandishments of the labor union demagogues?

The other major obstacle to foreign expansion of our international corporations is their high rate of taxation and the consequent governmental expenditures. Since World War II, our government has spent about 60 billion dollars in foreign aid. A huge foreign bureaucracy has been built up, but no appreciable reduction has been made in the great disparity between the standards of living in other countries and our own.

This disparity has existed for centuries; the awareness of it is comparatively recent. Hundreds of millions of people are suddenly demanding the benefits of Western civilization, and are increasingly resentful of seeming denials. They do not understand that the few billions each year contributed to foreign investment by the few countries with exportable capital are pitifully inadequate, and that literally trillions of dollars must be provided before they can enjoy anywhere near the Western standard of living.

Desperate situations require desperate remedies. The United States is spending about 45 billion dollars on defense programs. About 21.5 billion of this comes from the corporations as income taxes; this figure represents about half their profits.

Suppose our government negotiated a general disarmament agreement, and, as its *quid pro quo*, agreed to release this 21.5 billion dollars back to the corporations for them to use in foreign investment.

Such a program would entail temporary dislocation and unemployment at home until the flood of capital abroad could be translated into demand for our capital goods and other equipment. It is more than likely the period of adjustment to the new situation might require some millions of Americans to go through a period of aus-

terity and sacrifice, similar to many such periods endured by our forefathers. But surely the initiation of such a program to stimulate massive increases in private international investment would justify purely temporary privations of this sort.

Can we afford not to take such a bold, new, step—especially since the results of our governmental aid programs have been so disappointing? It might serve to break the current impasse in foreign affairs, for, as the immortal Shakespeare said:

*There is a tide in the affairs of men,  
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to  
fortune;*

*Omitted, all the voyage of their life  
Is bound in shallows and in miseries.*

If we launch ourselves on the sea of foreign investment, and curb our labor monopolies now—the conquest of poverty will be hastened. Final realization, resting upon the slow and tortuous processes of education and public understanding, remains a shadowy goal of the distant future.

## JAY AND J. HOWARD

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Patty were out of ear shot. "They will hate to leave their friends in Tulsa, but all children hate a change. They'll adjust; they've had a long time to think about it."

Jay Edmondson brought the portable television set into the living room and began adjusting it to the channel where her husband was appearing. She admitted that he is not the kind of husband who remembers ages, birthdays and anniversaries.

"I like to sit and watch Howard squirm when they ask him how old his children are," she said. "I used to write special dates in his calendar, but he doesn't even have time for that now, so I just type them up and hand them to him."

She refilled the coffee cups as she characterized the Edmondson romance as "on-again-off-again since the fifth grade" at Muskogee's Franklin grade school.

Asked about their religious affiliations, Jay said, "Howard has been able to keep up as teacher of an adult class at the John Knox Presbyterian church. We joined John Knox church before they even had a building. So we're really old timers in a new church." As she spoke, Jay was completely oblivious to the noise of a string of freight cars which went hurtling past on the Katy right-of-way bordering the Edmondson lot.

One of the Edmondson family friends and political supporters, W. P. Pruitt of Muskogee, walked in just as the familiar Edmondson fireside manner appeared on

the television screen. Mrs. Edmondson and Pruitt contributed side comments as the debate-trained voice laid out the Edmondson platform.

"I remember the night I looked up the minimum gubernatorial age," Jay laughed, after the program's moderator had commented on Edmondson's age. "We had been running for about six months, and it just then struck us that Howard might be too young."

J. Howard Edmondson slipped under the wire by only two years to qualify for a four-year stay in the governor's mansion (the minimum age is 31). In 1962 when he completes his term at age 37, the young Oklahoman will have passed the minimum age for occupancy of an even more impressive mansion in Washington.

But 1962 is a date the Edmondsons are not even thinking about. Enough has happened in the 33 years of J. Howard Edmondson's life to make them both pause for breath.

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