



Representative Richardson

ALUMNUS

BY POPULAR VOTE

WHEN your parents name you Robert E. Lee you are immediately a Democrat and soon a politician or a general. Robert E. Lee Richardson of the Weatherford Richardsons became a sworn-in politician January via the '58 elections; and by the same token he was elected into alumnus status from O. U.

Richardson was a second-year law student at O. U. last year when he got the urge to run for House of Representatives from Custer County. Commuting the 100 miles to and from Custer County to Norman for his summer classes, Richardson managed to pass his law exams and the more critical examination of his constituents (he won over four Old Guard in the primaries). The November election put him in the State Legislature—O. U.'s only student-legislator in '58—but the House's work load took him away from O. U. in February. It was a unique way to become an alumnus.



Richardson's most obvious political asset is his smile. In his first try at running for an office he came within 400 votes of a majority over four primaries opponents.

DESPITE his age (he's 26) and his being elected before graduating, Richardson hardly entered the political fray as a party-waist. To begin with, he has a smile comparable to Governor Rockefeller's and a manner as sincere as Billy Graham's. He also has a '51-'52 Korean stint on his record as well as a slight scar on his forehead (contracted, however, as a civilian.)

But moreover, Richardson is a trophy-laden orator from way back. Way back in Southwestern College, to be exact. He was graduated from there in 1956 (a BA in speech, with honors) after helping a Southwestern debate team win the State Senior College debate championship. He then taught speech and debate at Southwestern and directed the 1957 speech tournament in Amarillo (in which, incidentally, O. U. exacted a hardly-noticed victory over Notre Dame). He was teaching speech at the University of Arizona when he decided to put his silver tongue to wagging in O. U. law classes and Custer County debates.

Ironically, his ability on the debating platform was for some voters a detraction. Richardson laughs when he tells about the old lady who commented to a friend of his on how marvelously Richardson debated; and the friend replied, "Well, he should debate well! He has a speech degree and has taught debating in two colleges." The old lady, according to Richardson, was so shocked that "that nice young man" wasn't wowing her with virgin talents that she voted for another man.

His Assets: A Smile and Sincerity



Richardson's collegiate career sparkles with debate awards. Here he talks with his O. U. debating partner, Dean Linder.



Checking to see when last semester's grades will be sent out, Legislator Richardson employs his smile on the Law School secretary. He took 13 hours last semester; most helpful for his present duties was Constitutional Law.

Editorial responsibilities in the offices of the *Oklahoma Law Review* are what bring Richardson to Norman now. At right he looks over *Review* copy with Ed Adwon, another editor.



Alumnus
continued



Freshman Legislator Richardson (pointed to by arrow on the left) is one of approximately a third of the House's members who are freshmen, many of them O. U. graduates. Pictured examples include Bryce Baggett, '54ba, '56Law, Oklahoma City (center arrow); Dick Wheatley, '55ba, '57Law, Vinita (arrow on right); and Holland Meacham, '37ba, '40m.ed, Elk City (seated directly in front of Richardson).

His Problems: Factions and Functions

THE first legislative session Richardson ever witnessed he witnessed from the Chamber floor. He picked an exciting session in which to make his debut. The most publicized decision he had to make was on Repeal (he voted Dry the first ballot; Wet the second ballot), and his decision was weighed by the enormous number of Dry visitors and letters he got. More onerous

tasks await him as spokesman for Custer County's General Hospital (the Governor has recommended eliminating it) and the Western State Tuberculosis Hospital and Southwestern State College (the Governor has recommended consolidating them with other installations). Richardson is also a member of the important Appropriation and Budget Committee.



What they never tell beginners is that you spend most of your time as a legislator conferring with people who are always conferring with other people. At left, Richardson catches Representative Kenneth Poynor of Cleveland County. At right, he talks to Mrs. J. Ed Beall, first vice-president of the Jefferson-Bryan Club, before attending a club luncheon in February at which Governor Edmondson was a speaker.