

# Backlog

THE Big Red will be absent from the TV screens this fall, thanks to the handslapping by the NCAA, but the University itself is far from banished from the world of television. In fact, a new series has been launched which may in the long run prove an even more valuable booster of Oklahoma prestige. The project is known as *Expedition—Oklahoma*, a series of 13 television documentaries being co-produced by O.U. and KOCO-TV, Channel 5, Oklahoma City.

*Expedition—Oklahoma* is actually tied to a parent ABC network show, appropriately entitled *Expedition*, 39 weeks of vicarious exploring—Antarctica with International Geophysical Year scientists, an archaeologist's ventures into Central and South America, the conquering of Mount Everest, penetrating the Dark Continent. Every third Tuesday the cameras will turn homeward for a local show, in KOCO-TV's case to a colorful and exciting state history.

What's more, viewing of these historical accounts will not be restricted to KOCO-TV's broadcast area. Arrangements have already been made for the films to be aired by stations in Los Angeles, Chicago, Denver, Amarillo, Kansas City and other major cities.

The network *Expedition* started Tuesday, September 20, in the 6 to 6:30 time slot. The first of the Oklahoma shows, "Cow Country," the story of the cattle industry, its legendary trails, and the men who built them, went on the air October 4. "Oklahoma Gold—Oil" is scheduled for October 25 to be followed by "Oklahoma Land Runs" on November 15. In subsequent weeks the television cameras will record Oklahoma's military history, the Five Civilized Tribes, aviation in Oklahoma, famous Oklahoma personalities, communications in Oklahoma, railroads, No Man's Land.

*Expedition—Oklahoma* is no fly-by-night home movie venture, but an impressive professional addition to a rather meager offering of television programs worth seeing. The idea originated with Jim Swain, '54bus, assistant director of public information at O.U., and Ed Robbins, '57, national sales manager of KOCO-TV. The idea caught on both here at the University and with Station Manager Ben West and his production chief, Earl Hickerson.

Even the governor's office became interested in the project, in keeping with its long-overdue campaign to increase "Pride in Oklahoma." The Oklahoma department

of commerce and industry, with Max Genet as director, agreed to sponsor the show.

A top television script writer, Fritz Woyna, former continuity director of WFBM, Indianapolis, was employed by Channel 5 and moved to Norman from Chicago to whip mountains of research into workable form. The research facilities of the University were thrown open with the expert assistance of Dr. Arrell M. Gibson, '47ba, '48ma, '54ph.d, University archivist, and his assistant, Jack Haley, '53ba, and Dr. E. E. Dale, '11ba, research professor emeritus of history and one of the most noted of Oklahoma scholars.

Narrating the show is Frank Doyle, KOCO-TV news and public affairs director, formerly with the Mutual Broadcasting System. The job of co-ordinating the work of the University and the station rests with the office of public information, headed by David A. Burr, '52ba.

Study guides are being sent to all Oklahoma secondary schools before each *Expedition—Oklahoma* to enable teachers to coordinate their history courses with the program subjects.

Considering the warm reception given such documentary programs as *Victory at Sea*, *High Road*, *Project 20*, *The Twentieth Century* and *Bold Journey*, the new *Expedition* should do all right. But even more important is the effect which *Expedition—Oklahoma* can have on Oklahoma's appreciation—and that of people beyond the state—of things Oklahoman. We have been much too content to sit back in resigned acceptance of the "Okie" tag, the underprivileged Mid-Westerner lacking the culture of the East, the dynamic growth of the Far West, the tradition of the South.

As far as the University of Oklahoma is concerned, we have been too ready to let our national reputation rest with the fortunes of our football team—and they have been spectacular. But by restricting ourselves to such publicity, we have restricted ourselves in the eyes of the nation to the status of a football school—many might even say, a football state—a ridiculous attitude in the face of the other continuing contributions which O.U. is making to the state and to the nation.

The University can be proud to have had a hand—a most decisive hand—in *Expedition—Oklahoma*. Projects such as this could turn "Pride in Oklahoma," a mere campaign slogan, into an accomplished fact.

—CJR

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