

Backlog

THE FRIENDS OF DON EATON HAVE ESTABLISHED A MEMORIAL TO THE MAN WHO NEVER FORGOT O.U.

ALL too often the public image of alumni club activities has been that of rather purposeless gyrations of perpetual college boys. Historically, the public may have had a point. But today's alumni club is faced with a much more serious obligation. The "good times" are still too be found, but as a sideline, not the reason for existence.

At a recent organizational meeting of an O.U. alumni club, one prospective member made it clear to those present that he had no intention of wasting his time with club busywork unless the others were ready to do something constructive for the University. This feeling is being reflected throughout the O.U. club lineup in the increased interest in scholarship funds and high school recruitment.

Now the O.U. Club of Washington, D. C., has come forward with a project to encourage such activity on the part of its fellow alumni groups. The Don A. Eaton Memorial Award, in the form of a plaque presented last month to President G. L. Cross, is to be awarded annually by the Alumni Association to the club which is

the most most successful in promoting the University's academic program.

With the establishment of this award, the Washington Sooners have not only given a lift to the O.U. club projects in support of the educational purpose of the University, but they have also set up an appropriate tribute to one of the most active boosters the University has ever had. The late Don A. Eaton came to O.U. as a graduate student in journalism in 1947. He spent only two years on the campus, but when he went to Washington in 1950 as a state department employee, he was a Sooner all the way.

After doing editorial work for the state department for a year, Eaton joined the National Association of Home Builders as a research writer and general public relations assistant. In 1957 he became assistant director of the NAHB membership and field service department. His untimely death two years later, at the age of 37, brought to a close one of the most active periods of the O.U. Club of Washington.

At the time of Eaton's death, *Oklahoma-Times* Washington correspondent Allan Cromley wrote, "His was an eagle eye

for newcomers from Soonerland. His avocation was gathering Oklahomans together for mutual enjoyment of their superior background."

Shortly after his own arrival in the nation's capital, Eaton organized the Oklahoma Dinner Club, a monthly affair at the National Press Club to supplement the regular O.U. Club activities which were held every four or five months. The dinner club needed no officers. Eaton personally saw to it that the meetings were held on schedule and that every interested Oklahoman was notified.

He became president of the O.U. Club of Washington in 1955 and was an adviser to subsequent officers from then on. He never forgot the University of Oklahoma—and he never allowed any other alumnus of his acquaintance to forget O.U. either. It's not difficult to understand that with the loss of Don Eaton, the O.U. Club of Washington lost much of its old enthusiasm. Nor is it surprising that interest in the Eaton award project has been largely responsible for rekindling the club's desire to increase its support of the University.

In the years to come, the University will need this support from alumni groups if the obligation to the future is to be met. To be sure, the University will be asking them for money—but also for homefront backing with the state legislature, to promote the University within their communities, to encourage high school graduates to attend O.U.

O.U. needs more money, but it also needs a few more Don Eatons.

—CJR



The Don Eaton Memorial Plaque is presented to Dr. G. L. Cross (center) by Richard D. Lambert (left) and Charles D. Ablard, president of the University of Oklahoma Club of Washington, D. C.

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