

The Class of 1911:

It's So Nice to Be Back

the golden anniversary alumni returned to a campus far different from the one they left



Reunion co-chairmen W. King Larimore (left) and Dr. Frank Balyeat check a list of their 1911 classmates—most of whom remembered their class leaders as they looked in the Sooner Yearbook photos at right.

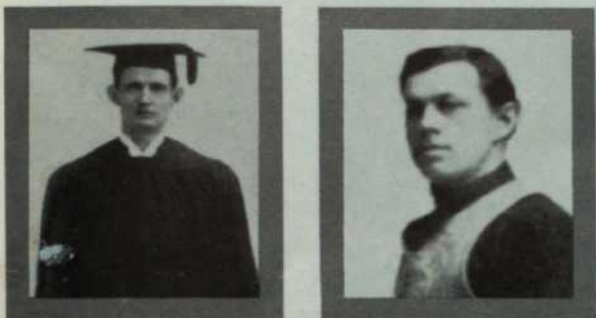
THE class flirt was there—and so was the campus wit, and they had a lot to talk over. A lot had happened since 1911 when they were roaming the O.U. campus. Their class had been a pretty close-knit group, but in 50 years you're bound to lose touch—and this golden anniversary reunion was the first time many of the class members had been together.

The class roll had shrunk considerably from the original 82 graduates, but enthusiasm among the 37 survivors had never been greater. During the Commencement weekend 24 of them, headed by class co-chairmen Dr. Frank Balyeat, '11ba, '18ma, professor emeritus of education at O.U., and W. King Larimore, '11ba, of Oklahoma City, gathered for an anniversary dinner to renew old friendships and reminisce about their college days.

Included in the list of those attending were Dr. Balyeat, Mabel Bridgewater Force, Edward E. Dale, Cora Higgins Haskett and Dorothy Bell, all of Norman; Larimore, Mrs. Marjorie Faxton Larimore, Everett Z. Carpenter, James Leo Housh, Clarence McFerron and Peter W. Swartz, all of Oklahoma City; Grace Lee Jochem and Bess McLennan Hughes, both of Tulsa; Walter B. Adams, Wichita Falls, Texas; John A. Bryan, Antlers; Elmer E. Darnell, Weatherford; P. D. Erwin, Chandler; Darrel C. Jenks, Purcell; Wynn Ledbetter Pulley, Fort Worth, Texas; Olive Leeper, Los Angeles; Clara Merkle Bowling, Pauls Valley; Joseph O. Ballenger, Santa Rosa, New Mexico; C. V. Lisman, Dallas; Earl Q. Gray, Lawton, and Ernest Lambert, Okmulgee.

They had a lot to remember:





At right Dr. E. E. Dale and Bennie Owen talk over the 1911 days when they were the fellows above—Dale the scholarly historian later to become O.U.'s favorite prof and Owen already on his way to Sooner coaching fame.



When the Class of 1911 entered the University as freshmen in 1907, Oklahoma was just making the transition from territory to state. The small student body was a friendly group actively promoting all-school events on a mushrooming campus.

By the time graduation came, the University had progressed far enough to be proud of its "Then" and "Now" pictures. The 1911 *Sooner Yearbook* featured a comparison of the rough muddy streets of the founding days and the smooth dirt roads, concrete walks and tree-lined avenues of 1911.

Although much of the campus has changed since the 1911 graduates were in school, the returning alumni found much to remind them of that year. Several of the present buildings are named for professors of their day—Evans Hall, DeBarr Hall, Holmberg Hall, Gould Hall—the class memorials remain, and some of the early buildings still stand.

On the sports side the alumni are well aware of the changes that 50 years have brought. Football was still pretty new then, but the boys did better in 1911 than they did in 1961—they beat Texas. The big rival in 1911 was Kansas who battered the O.U. team 2 to 0. The Sooners had a good season. They beat Kingfisher College 66-0 in a practice scrimmage, Edmond 79-0 and Stillwater 12-0. The only major defeat was from Missouri, 26-0.

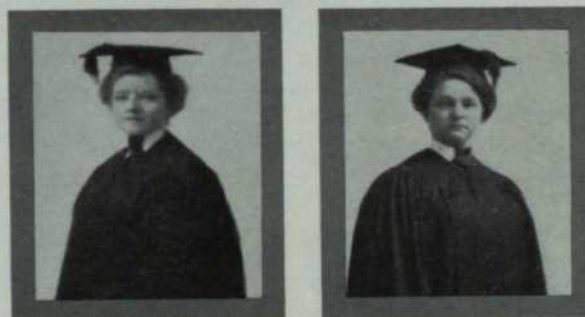
The 1911 *Sooner Yearbook* said, "We advanced to an equal position with first class universities by qualifying under the Missouri Valley Rules. We showed that games with state schools could be considered only as practice games."

The giant serpentine shirt-tail parades were a major part of firing up school spirit before the big games with yards and yards of crimson and cream (not just red and white) flapping in the breeze and loud yells of "Hi Rickety Hoopity Do!" filling the air.

Those were the years when daily chapel was a part of campus life for all students and faculty members, when Honest Abe Ellis, tall, quiet campus debater, was hired by President Evans to stand at the library door to remind students that "The President desires that you go to chapel."

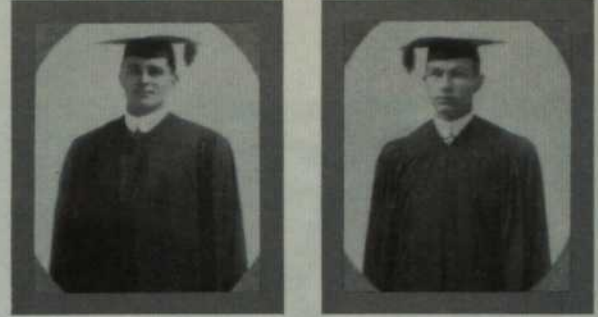
In 1911 there were just a few official University buildings and virtually no University housing—it wasn't needed. Some of the

continued



The 1911 O.U. coeds pictured above, Bess McLennan (left), who is now Mrs. Hughes, and Clara Merkle, now Mrs. Bowling, had 50 years of notes to compare when they met at the Golden Anniversary dinner of their class.





The pharmacists of the Class of 1911 had two representatives at the Golden Anniversary, James Leo Housh (left) and J. O. Ballenger, shown at left as they checked in at the dinner, and above as they appeared in the Yearbook.

IT'S SO NICE TO BE BACK continued

girls lived in King Hall, a church project; others lived in Arline Home for Girls, but most roomed in private homes.

In a brief history of the Class of 1911 prepared by Dr. Balyeat, he says, we cannot "forget the class scraps and the hayrides of those days. Some considered the annual fall class scrap as the most important educational experience that O.U. boys enjoyed." In those raucous battles one class would raise its flag on the flag pole and then grease the pole and wrap it with barbed wire to keep the other class from raising its own flag. It was no easy job to lasso the top of the pole and bend it down far enough to pull off the waving flag and replace it with another.

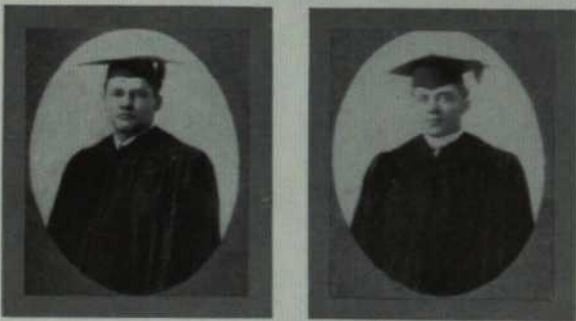
The student body was small enough then to plan all-school functions. Until the advent of extended spring vacations, the entire student body cut classes April 1 for an all-school picnic at some spot such as the old persimmon groves across the Canadian.

In those days the girls trooped to classes in high heels and long dresses, with extravagant pompadour hairdos, and busied themselves with their various organizations and literary societies.

Literary societies were very big on campus, especially for the men. First there was the Senate and later its companion the House of Representatives, the Forum and Websterian and Cicero-nian. In 1910 Pe-et had been organized as the first honor society for men, and the Class of 1911 was eager to keep it going.

Many traditions had already been founded—a yearbook, first called the *Mistletoe* and later the *Sooner*; a newspaper, the *Um-pire*—and enrolment was rising every year. To compensate for the absence of a special literary publication on campus, the yearbook published a literary section featuring works by professors, students and alumni. The 1911 section was dedicated to V. L. Parrington, an early instructor, and later Pulitzer Prize winner.

The old University with its newly-planted trees and small cluster of buildings has given way to an ever-expanding institution with an international academic reputation. In 1911 the University could list its alumni on four pages of the yearbook. Now alumni rolls total over 56,000. But for all its amazing growth, the University's goal is basically the same—to produce the best in college graduates—graduates who can return 50 years from now to an institution they can be proud of.



Fifty years had passed since medical school classmates Dr. E. E. Darnell (left) and Dr. Walter B. Adams had met. They agreed that the names were familiar but the faces didn't quite match those from the 1911 *Sooner* Yearbook.

