

The Scotsman

Says Goodby

friends and former players

honor Hugh McDermott

INDEED, it was quite a day for The Little Scotsman.

They came from near and far to pay him tribute—close friends and distant relatives, All-Americans and bench jockeys, teaching colleagues and high school teammates—in one of the largest pre-retirement affairs ever held on the Norman campus. Some 350 partisan fans were not about to let *this* man leave the University without one big gala farewell.

The Hugh McDermott festivities on March 2 offered a perfect blend of humor and sentiment, and the streams of gifts and praise that flowed throughout the evening gave special notice that Scotty was much more than the most successful basketball coach in O.U. history.

Reunion activities began with a handshaking, back-slapping reception at the “O” Club and ended in the Field House where McDermott officially received the Helms Foundation’s coaching Hall of Fame certificate.

Highlight of the evening, however, was the dinner in the Union Ballroom where Scotty was presented a color television set, a new set of golf clubs, a gold plaque containing the names of all of the men who played under him and a scrapbook filled with letters from his many friends. Also, a color portrait was given to the physical education department which he headed upon his resignation as basketball coach in 1939.

But, perhaps the greatest tribute to the likeable Scotsman came from the mouths of several of those who have been closest to him—former players, such as Bruce Drake, All-American and member of the all-victorious team of 1928; Bud Browning, 1935 All-American, and Bill Martin, captain of the famous “Boy Scats” of 1938; former track coach John Jacobs; Cliff

Bowles, Houston oilman, who played under McDermott at Norman High School when the latter was still an O.U. student; Mac’s boss for two decades, President George L. Cross; Duncan oilman Nolen Fuqua, who played with Scotty on the state’s first champion high school basketball team, and Dr. V. E. Monnett, McDermott’s next-door neighbor for the past 35 years.

In addition to McDermott and his wife, Emma Jean, other special guests included their children, Jack and Caroline, and Mr. and Mrs. Bennie Owen. Former football coach Dewey “Snorter” Luster, who served as master-of-ceremonies, kept things on an informal basis with his humorous verbal raps directed toward McDermott and guest speakers. Luster set the stage for the Sooner veterans on hand when he quipped, “You know, there’s an old saying that old athletes never die, they just wrap themselves in an old sweaty sweatshirt and suffocate.”

The other half of the prevailing atmosphere that evening was the fact known to everyone present that McDermott would soon be ending a 49-year partnership with the University of Oklahoma. He will retire this spring as professor of physical education.

But Mac himself contends, “I don’t intend to retire. I am just going to retread and go on about my business.” On the tributes paid him, he said, “These things are more than one deserves for doing something he likes to do. I do not figure I’ve labored during my tenure here. It’s been a pleasure—doing what I wanted with boys I loved.” He then asked for a moment of silence for his former players who are deceased.

Mac told the dinner guests that during his years here, O.U. has had five presidents, six athletic directors and eight football coaches while competing in five different

conferences. “If there’s one thing I’ve learned with aging,” he said, “it’s that there’ll be some changes made.”

Most of the old graduates and former students attending the reunion can easily recall those hoopla years of 1921 through 1938 when McDermott-coached quintets razzle-dazzled their way to domination in Missouri Valley and Big Six cage circles. This was the greatest era for basketball at O.U., and Bruce Drake, Mac’s successor as head coach, best describes how and why it all came about.

“My college coach, Hugh McDermott, had the greatest won-lost record of any coach in the history of the University of Oklahoma. 1926, my freshman year at O.U., found my coach with a great team that broke Dr. Forrest C. Allen’s ‘string of pearls’, as the doctor put it, at 34. And I remember those starters as if it was only yesterday. That team was Mickey McBride, Doc Ruppert, Dick Wheeler, Fred Wallace and John Dunlap. In 1928, my college coach won 18 and lost none. They didn’t have the NCAA championships at that time, and during that same year, the great Purdue team also went undefeated at 18 and 0. My college coach tried his best, as did O.U.’s president and the state of Oklahoma, to get that great Purdue team back here for what would have been the mythical national championship. But they didn’t want any part of it.

“The remarkable thing about our club that year, in my estimation, is that the starting five earned 14 letters in three years of competition here at Oklahoma. And my college coach only had two weeks in which to get that starting five into shape, since four of them were regulars on the football team. In 1929, the old Missouri Valley folded and a new league was formed. It was then known as the Big Six. So, what did my college coach do? He ripped through them and was undefeated again and won another championship. During three years there, he had a record of 31 consecutive victories. And it wasn’t long after that until my college coach came up with his most colorful team—the go-go-go boys of that day—better known to all of us as the Boy Scats. And who could forget those Scats—Jimmy McNatt, Marvin Mesch, Roscoe Walker, Vernon “Moon” Mullen and Captain Bill Martin. My college coach had four All-Americans, and four, while playing AAU ball, made the All-American team an accumulative of 16



At halftime of the O.U.-Nebraska game on Hugh McDermott Day, Scotty, flanked by many of his former players, receives a plaque commemorating his election to the Helms Foundation Hall of Fame.

times. Only last year, my college coach received the highest award that a coach can receive by being named by the Helms Athletic Foundation to the great Hall of Fame for his noteworthy achievements in college basketball.

"My college coach was more than a coach to all of us players. He was a trainer. He was our advisor. He was a psychologist. And he was like a father who heard all of our problems. He and Emmajan were the ones who fed us when we lost our jobs washing dishes, because there were no scholarships at that time. My college coach taught us fair play. He never whimpered. My college coach could take the bitter with the sweet. And I never saw my college coach get off the bench to try and help Mr. Ernie Quigley call a ball game. The only time he would come off the bench was when one of his players got racked on the floor—like the time Bud Browning got put in the nickel seats up at Gallagher Hall, or the time when the late Roy LeCrone got four teeth knocked out of his lowers when we were playing Drake University at Des Moines, Iowa.

"My college coach believed in conditioning, and, believe me, everyone was in shape. And, incidentally, he had the hardest knuckles I ever felt. And he could kick harder and grab you by the lobe of the ear and walk you around and talk to you and keep kickin' you and knocking you on the head. We knew what he meant. He meant business. My college coach has helped us all to get a start in this great game of life. And the lessons we learned under him on the basketball court are exactly the same that make for better men in every walk of life. Mac taught us to have a desire, to accomplish something worthwhile. You taught us, Mac, to master the right fundamentals. And, lastly, you taught us teamwork and ability to get along together. Scotsman, it's been a genuine pleasure coming back to this reunion and note the expression of satisfaction on your face as you chat with all of us. And I'm sure I express the feelings of all of your old boys by saying:

"Scotsman, your life has been unselfish. It is for others you live. It wasn't for how much you could get, but how much you could give. You taught us to live close to God and His infinite grace. Therefore, Mac, you don't have to say so; it shows in your face. God bless you."—CHARLES LONG