



THE BUCHANAN YEARS

UPON BROOKS' resignation, the Board of Regents appointed Dr. James Shannon Buchanan as acting president, and in 1924, he was elected president for the entire school year. "An acting president just doesn't work," he pointed out. Despite his short incumbency, it was said that Buchanan's administration was very successful, and, although no great advancements were made, the University continued to progress during those two years. In the wake of Brooks' departure and the sudden impeachment of Gov. John C. Walton, Dr. Buchanan "tided the University over one of the most serious crises in the history of the institution, and, by his courage, tact and foresight, he won the admiration of the people of the state."

Before his presidency, Buchanan was for fourteen years dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. Known mainly as a good teacher of history and an avid student of politics, the man with the corncob pipe was also considered to be a good conversationalist and humorist and an unusually good after-dinner speaker. His "soft, slurred speech from Tennessee" helped make him an easy man to know personally, and students and faculty members alike addressed him simply as "Uncle Buck."

"No bare recital of facts would ever tell the story of Dean Buck's life," said one. "It was too closely intertwined with the lives of Sooner students ever to be set down in cold words. In the finest sense he typified the university professor—an able instructor, a trusted friend."

Highlight of Buchanan's term came with what had to be

the largest all-campus campaign in the school's annals. Since the frame building used by the Y.M.C.A. had burned to the ground and no work had ever begun toward rebuilding it, students, led by B. S. (Cheebie) Graham, and University officials joined ranks in a concerted effort to acquire a union building. Also, athletic director Owen was attempting to solicit support for a new stadium, an endeavor which had already met with several failures.

Eugene Faulkner, a member of the Class of '23 and a long-time campaigner for a union building, was named chairman of the committee, and he and Graham were sent to the universities of Purdue, Illinois, Northwestern, and Chicago to look over plans for similar projects. Upon their return and report, the committee decided to raise \$350,000 for the erection of a building. Soon afterwards the stadium and union building committees joined forces and began the million-dollar campaign for what was known as the Stadium-Union fund.

Graham worked out most of the details and directed the campaign among students and alumni, and he remained the man at the helm during the trying days when Sooners set out to raise money to build the two structures. State political conditions slowed action to some extent, but the drive was begun in earnest in 1924. The project would be completed to almost everyone's satisfaction in the fall of 1928.

Meanwhile, the D.D.M.C.'s appeared on stage at the freshman election and explained to the class of new stu-

dents that their organization was in existence to preserve Soonerland traditions. The class cheered them, sang "Boomer Sooner," and then elected Leon Vinson, Shawnee, president; Georgia Harter, Ponca City, queen, and Bill Maurer, Oklahoma City, cheer leader. The Tri-Delt house on Elm Avenue was the scene of the University's first panty raid. "What students could be involved in such a thing so terrible!" went the whispers. It was really considered a very serious matter.

Unrestrained students didn't make life any easier for Buchanan than they had his predecessors. For example, after the freshman elections, the class marched downtown and raided all drug stores, stocking up on toilet water and lipsticks, after which merchants placed claims for \$974.60 in stolen and damaged goods. Later, everything was settled when the students voted a class assessment of \$2.00 per man to pay for the escapade.

Other students would make more favorable impressions. One in particular was destined to become a famous playwright after leaving the University. And ten years after Lynn Riggs wrote *Green Grow the Lilacs*, a composer and lyricist named Rodgers and Hammerstein would adapt from it a musical called *Oklahoma!*

By 1924, fraternities and sororities were growing larger than ever, and the *Sooner* yearbook that year gave them a more than adequate lampooning. "Kappa Alpha Theta," it said, "was founded in Greencastle, Indiana, by two daughters of a Phi Gam, Beta, or any other organization that has three stars somewhere on its shield or pin. Qualifications for membership are: To be rich, or from a good family and rich; to be six-feet tall, broad-minded, and rich; or to have been bid by Kappa Kappa Gamma, pledged by Pi Beta Phi, and rich. The pin is the kite and is symbolic of the height that the chin must be carried upon obtaining membership. It also suggests dizziness that some of its members reach when offered a fraternity pin. The local chapter was originally founded to give nightly entertainment for the Phi Gams . . ." Phi Gamma Delta was founded, the book said, "by a South Sea Islander who had been overcome by the heat"; Kappa Sigma, "by John L. Sullivan and Steve Brodie in the old gymnasium, hence the intimate association with dumb-bells"; and Kappa Alpha "by Anheuser-Busch and the Haig Brothers." Delta Delta Delta is an "honorary agricultural sorority founded by Isaac Walton's daughter"; and Sigma Chi "was founded in the Enid home for the feeble-minded, the Greek letters Sigma Chi signifying Simple Children." The Beta Theta Pi "mansion resembles the chapter house at Sing Sing and frequently it is mistaken for the county jail," while Sigma Nu "was started in the back of a saloon by a group of drunken cadets with the delirium tremens from the Virginia Military Institute." . . . "The chief Roaring Lion from the Den of Tiberius escaped from the Zoo in Oklahoma City and hence the local chapter" of Sigma Alpha Epsilon. And of Pi Beta Phi, the *Sooner* said: "This women's auxiliary to Beta Theta Pi was founded by two shoe-shiners' wives who were in the Sorosis Clubs before anyone had learned anything of precaution. They have successfully lived down their reputation for wildness largely because they don't get to date any more. Once in awhile a Beta will take pity on the loyal auxiliary and come to see them, that is, when they can't get dates elsewhere. But true to their founda-

tion, the Pi Phis still swear by the Betas, glad to get even the crumbs that drop from the mighty Wooglin board." And so on.

Following a 13-year absence from the University, Dr. Charles Gould returned as head of the Oklahoma Geological Survey and to a geology school that had twenty times as many men enrolled as there were in the entire University when he first came. It was during this period and following that the University of Oklahoma geologists were to establish themselves as the most successful petroleum geologists any single school has ever produced.

In the meantime, a special committee of the Board of Regents with the assistance of some faculty members began searching for a permanent president. Buchanan definitely had no aspirations to continue at the post. This is not to say that he was not a good president. He was. He got along with people extremely well, and, like Brooks, he knew the state and its politicians. But Buchanan fancied himself as an academician, not as an administrator, and he did not want that situation reversed for very long.



The big senior day parade was an annual spring event.

Dr. Gould said of Dr. Buchanan: "He was one of those men to whom one instinctively applies a nickname. And the nickname came. About 1902, a favorite nephew, Tom B. Matthews came to the University from his home state, Tennessee, and it was he who first applied to his uncle the familiar name 'Uncle Buck' which his nephews and nieces in Tennessee had used. It was only a short time until other young men and women, intimates of Tom B., were saying 'Uncle Buck.' The name grew until it spread over the campus, over the state and 'to the uttermost parts of the earth.' Professor Buchanan was an ideal university man, namely a teacher, a scholar and a drudge. For, in order to be a complete success, every university man must be these things.

"First, he must be a good teacher. He must attract students, make his work interesting and build up a department. Then he must be a scholar, a research man. He must do things in his chosen field outside the four walls of the classroom. He must enlarge and enrich his profession and make a name and reputation for himself. And lastly, he must be willing to do the hundred-and-one things on the campus that someone must do, but that few people like to do. He must serve on committees, advise with students, look after details and help keep the wheels moving. In other words, he must be a faculty drudge. All of these things Professor Buchanan did and did well."