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ALUMNI NEWS

Second Varsity President Dies

Dr. A. Grant Evans Had Long and Eventful Career

By *Luthera Mills*, '29

WHEN Arthur Grant Evans, president of the University of Oklahoma from 1908 to 1911, died several weeks ago, November 30, at his home in Santa Barbara, California, the youthful university for the first time mourned a president. Although most of the students who knew him have long since left the halls of their Alma Mater, it wasn't hard to learn from men who worked with him during that second decade of the university, that the man was affable and kind, genial and beloved. He had reached the fiftieth year when he came here, and must by that time have learned the value of that amiable spirit he seems to embody in the minds of his friends.

In the seventy years of his vigorous life, our second university president had a variety of interests. At Madras, India, September 9, 1858, he began what was to be for him a rather long interesting, and particularly useful rambing through life. Born of English parents he was educated at London, England, where he received the A. B. degree from Borough Road college in 1877. For four years following his college career he was principal of public schools at Earls Barton, England.

Mr. Evans came to this country in 1883 and worked as a missionary with the Cherokee Indians. In 1887 he was ordained as a Presbyterian minister and became a pastor at Oswego, Kansas, and later at Pendleton, Oregon, and Leadville, Colorado. In 1891 he married Miss Katherine Robb, daughter of A. W. Robb, prominent in Muskogee history. Again he became active in educational work in 1892 when he took the position as principal of Salida academy in Colorado, where he remained for several years.

Just before he came to the University of Oklahoma, Doctor Evans was presi-

dent for ten years of Henry Kendall college at Muskogee, which has since become the University of Tulsa. That he had a widely varied range of contacts, and considerable training both as an educator and a minister, is evident.

DOCTOR EVANS' presidency at the University of Oklahoma was marked by some notable achievements. His associates seem agreed that the most important of these was the construction of the administration building, for which he was largely responsible. The collegiate Gothic style of architecture innovated here at that time was proposed and urged by him. Dr. Roy Gittinger, dean of administration, has admirably suggested that the renaming of the building, changing it to Evans hall, would be a fitting tribute to the man who selected our campus architecture and made it an institution and tradition of the university.

It was also during Doctor Evans' presidency that the school of law was established here. Also, he was interested in the expansion of the medical school, and while he headed the university Dr. Louis A. Turley and Dr. Gay-free Ellison were brought here.

Dean Gittinger who has been with the university through a series of successes and tribulations, in reminiscence of his friend, Doctor Evans, said, "Mr. Evans was a good speaker and liked to 'read.' We used to smile a little at his fondness for Italian dialect pieces." Dr. S. W. Reaves, dean of the college of arts and sciences added, "Yes, and we used to smile a little at his tendency to give anniversary addresses. We used to have chapel every day in those days, and President Evans' knowledge of men and affairs gave him a natural inclination for occasional addresses."

It was inevitable that this good Englishman, who it is said, retained his English accent and manners, should have admired Dickens. We had hoped from the start that this was true, and in talking with Dr. Charles N. Gould, director of the Oklahoma Geological Survey we learned that the old gentleman did indeed have a Dickensian trend. Doctor Gould said, "He liked Dickens, and was particularly fond of 'Little Dorritt' and 'Pickwick Papers.'" He liked to recite passages from these novels. He was a good entertainer and a good president.

There is a printing foreman at the university who has become as much an institution as Uncle Bennie and the Sooner "howdy." Sam Crawford, superintendent of the University Press, is his full name and official title. He is another admirer of the second president. "He was as nice an old man as you'd ever see. He used to come back to the shop and hit me on the back and say, 'How are you today, Sam?' He was a fine fellow, agreeable to work with."

JOSEPH F. PAXTON, professor of Greek and classical archeology, recalls the morning that Arthur Grant Evans arrived in Norman to assume the presidency of the adolescent university. It happened that Mr. Paxton was conducting the daily chapel service that morning, in the top story of what present students know as the education building. As he recognized the new university head enter the chapel gathering, the Greek professor brought him to the front of the auditorium, and invited students to make personal contact with the president of their university; to come to the front, and introduce themselves. It must have been less dull for a president to meet his

charges in that way than merely by the means of a formal address.

"Doctor Evans was a very attractive and loveable sort of man," Mr. Paxton said. "He had a special talent in quoting many poets. His tendency was toward the semi-humorous along this line. He admired the witty side of poetry,—humorous verse, but verse containing real poetry. Among the great poets he liked to quote, foremost perhaps, were Shakespeare and Byron."

In further reminiscences of Doctor Evans' literary tastes Mr. Paxton also recalled that he was wont to recite passages from Dickens—"Cricket on the Hearth," he recalled in particular.

On one occasion after Doctor Evans had moved to California, Mr. and Mrs. Paxton on a western trip, made a visit to the Evans family. Doctor Evans was then very much engrossed in his work as a pastor.

Through Mr. Paxton's visit to the former president we see him at home as he was in the world of his profession, kindly, lovable, a man at peace with life and the world. The professor on a visit to the former president noted and remembered a close affection between the man and his wife, and his children—a tenderness that was apparent to friendly visitors.

After learning other traits of the man, we found with interest and no surprise that he experimented with horticulture and included a study of it in his various other interests. He liked to discuss the fruit that they had raised, tell of the skill of the Japanese in this pursuit. The philosophical professor remembered a remark that his friend contributed in the course of the conversation,—the Japanese explanation of their own earth-tilling skill. The Japanese say that the reason for their success is that they

talk to the plants and the flowers.



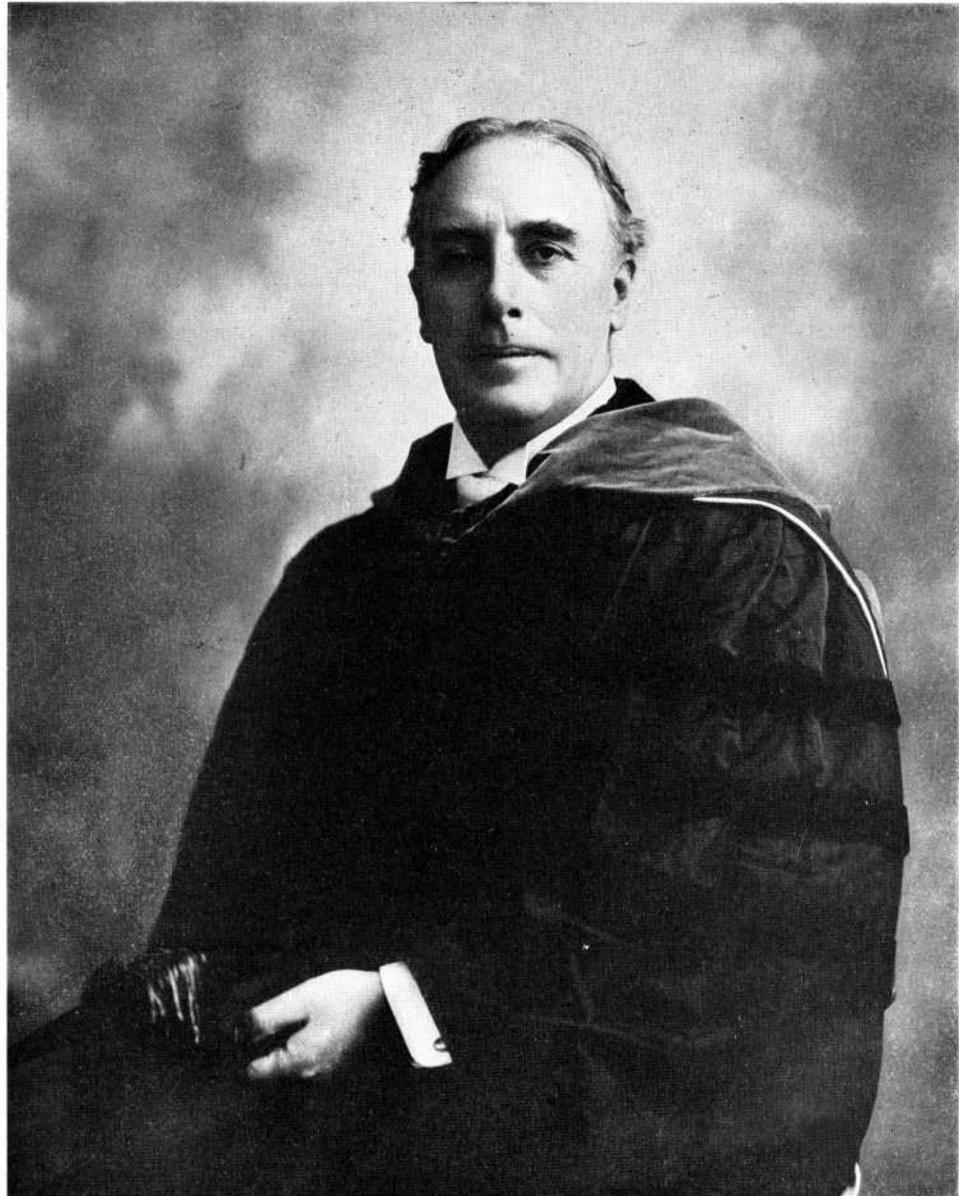
AFTER his retirement from the presidency of the University of Oklahoma he became pastor of El Montecito Presbyterian church at Santa Barbara, California, and held that position until he died as the result of a stroke of apoplexy in November of the year just past. He was also a professor of philosophy at the State Teachers' college at Santa Barbara for a number of years.

Doctor Evans received his appointment to the presidency of the university through Governor Charles N. Has-

kell. He was a democrat and a prohibitionist, and fought hard for the dry cause in this state.

President Evans was one of the three persons ever to have received an honorary degree from the University of Oklahoma. He was awarded the LL. D. degree in 1909. He had also received a D. D. degree from Henry Kendall college in Muskogee.

Doctor Evans was survived by five children, one of whom, Ted Evans, was formerly editor of the Oklahoma News, and now a member of the general editorial board of the Scripps-Howard newspapers.



DR. A. GRANT EVANS

Second president of the University of Oklahoma and the first president of the university to enter the Great Beyond. It was Doctor Evans who established the Collegiate Gothic style of architecture for university buildings, and Dr. Roy Gittinger has suggested that the administration building be renamed Evans hall in his memory.