DEAN OF THE PRACTICE GATE

Everybody's fraternity brother, the inimitable Morris Tenenbaum, is his fifth decade at OU, is number one in the nation at his calling.

By SUSAN WALTZ

The Oklahoma Daily

Hey, fraternity brother, want some sleeping pills? The football player pauses as he leaves the practice field and holds out his hand. The small man with the wrinkled, sun-browned face digs into a pocket of a pair of magnificently baggy trousers and produces a piece of hard candy. He hands it to the player and grows in a rasping, heavily accented voice, "Now get on outta here."

This is Morris Tenenbaum, whose gruff, caustic manner fails to fool anyone. Underneath, Morris is an old softie, and everybody knows it, including the many coaches and players whom he has called "fraternity brothers" for the past four decades.

"Maurice," as the players call him, is the self-appointed gate watcher for OU football practices. Rain or shine he has assumed his station at the practice field for 40 years, and under his scrutinizing gaze only official pass holders make their way to practice.

This has been a particularly satisfying year for Morris, for he has made it official by being awarded a scholarship for his 40 years of service. Rain or shine, Morris has been there every day, and under his grandfatherly style, the students have learned a thing or two about dressing.

"I've been a part of OU as the South Oval and Campus Corner. Hundreds of students have known me as the 'coach's office.'" (Sooner Magazine, Sept.)

Morris came to the United States from Russian Poland when he was "old enough to get there." When he arrived in America, his only possession was a Bible and an American penny. He no longer has the penny, but the Bible is still in his living room.

He enlisted in the Army and fought in World War I, and in the Second World War he served long hours without pay for the USO. He moved to Oklahoma City in 1913 and came to Norman in 1923. During the depression years Morris started a second-hand clothing business that made him well known among the students, particularly those in the fraternity and sorority houses. The Greeks, he found, would more readily sell him the clothes off their backs for extra spending money. "Morris used to stand at the gates to the University and walk from house to house buying clothes," recalls a student of that era. "He'd have three or four hats stacked high on his head and a bundle of old clothes in his arms. Just ask him how many student trips to Dallas he's financed. He could charm the trousers off some guy who needed money for the trip."

Morris took the clothes home, remade them, using the skills he had learned from his father, a tailor in the old country, and sold them. The years rolled by, and Morris continued to do business with the students, soon buying secondhand clothes from the sons and daughters of his earlier customers. "They gave me a blanket. Made a letterman outta me," says Morris. He has a picture in his home Continued on page 25

Above, Morris looks over some merchandise with two fraternity brothers in the late 40's. Below, resting an arm on his omnipresent walking stick, Morris sucks up the sun as he observes a 1966 team scrimmage.
venient as possible, found financial aid for many, and wrote their parents about their progress. A letter from one of the handicapped students whom he counseled appeared in the Daily the day of Dean Couch's funeral:

It was my privilege to know Dean Couch as well or better than any student on this campus. I am a physically handicapped student who first met him when I came to OU five years ago as a freshman. My relationship with Dean Couch went beyond that of advisor and student. To put it succinctly, Dean Couch was my intellectual father.

Without knowing whether I would turn out to be a good student or not, he invested great time and energy in my educational process and in the personal difficulties that come with being a handicapped student on a college campus. His faith in me is the basis for the deepest personal grief I have ever felt...

While I am, with every member of the University, grieving the loss of Dean Couch, I ask you to join me in celebrating the privilege of having known such a man. I know he has aided and influenced many students and in his years of service has done much to build the University of Oklahoma and the cause of higher education in this state. I ask you to think of what this university and what you and I would be if there had never been a Dean Couch. I ask you to give thanks for his life and his service to us all. Sincerely, Guy Edsinger.

Dean Couch was no less devoted to the "average" student. As he expanded the University's guidance and counseling services, "Our first interest," he said, "is to help the student make an adjustment to college life. Education is essentially and wholly an individual process. Guidance is valuable because it deals with choices, with adjustments, and with interpretations."

His friends and colleagues will miss his warmth, his humor, his ability, his insight. The University will miss his dedication, his foresight, his leadership. The students will simply miss Dean Couch.

He is survived by his wife of 33 years, the former Ida Marguerite LeCrone; a son, Joseph Barton, and a daughter, Mrs. Wolfgang Stoechle, both of Norman.

Contributions in his memory may be made to the Glenn Couch Memorial Fund or to the Marco Fund for Handicapped Students, in care of the OU Foundation, Union Bldg., Norman.

Dean of the Practice Gate

Continued from page 37

commemorating the award. It shows Morris grinning at the camera, the blanket bearing the large white "O" draped around him. Morris attends all the annual O Club banquets, and at one not many years ago he startled his fellow lettermen. Dr. Cross had finished making a brief talk, and Bud Wilkinson in the course of his remarks pointed to Morris and asked for applause in recognition of his service. Morris acknowledged the applause and then walked straight to the speaker's table to make his own speech. In front of his boys and the audience Morris apologized for his inability to speak in public like Dr. Cross and "Bud Wilkinson" but he had "never had an opportunity to have a formal education." He expressed his gratitude to the school and to the athletic department, then reached into a pocket. Instead of pulling out the traditional candy or gum, Morris produced a check for $500. "I want to give this to the O Club," he said, then sat down.

Morris is devoted to his football players, though he isn't a fan of the game itself. "I don't care about football," he says. "I just come out and give the boys gum every day. I like them, and they like me. Otherwise, I wouldn't come." Bantering with his boys is a favorite pastime. Tom Stidham runs by Morris on the way to the practice field. "There goes Tommy Stidham," yells Morris. "Can't punt the ball. Too busy thinkin' about getting married." Stidham grins and grows taciturn. Ben Hart rates high on Morris' list. He gets Wild Cherry gum, a brand reserved for the best players. "I love him," says Ben. Morris is not reluctant to share some insights with a listener. About college players he says: "It's not football that hurts these boys. It's college girls. They dream about them all night." About Coach Mackenzie: "A prince." About the Notre Dame game: "You look at history. All those kings and queens who thought they'd never fall. And then came the guillotine. Nothing's impossible." (Morris is not infallible.) Concerning cosmology: "This planet's not moving—only the people on it."

Though his devotion to his boys hasn't faltered, Morris admits that he himself is slowing down: "I'm getting like an old dog. I just want to lie down. I even get tired of talking to people." But he always seems to have enough energy to put a rookie at ease or to cheer up an older boy after a disappointing game. You can see him at each home game sitting in his favored positions on the sideline or scurrying to fill Coach Mackenzie's paper cup with ice water when the coach yells, "Morris!" And of course during the week, Morris is at the practice field gate. And fraternity brother or no fraternity brother, you'd better have a pass if you want to get in.

END

Backstage with the Brains

Continued from page 5

Ed popped his knuckles as he listened to his answers.

Ralph's room didn't seem different from that of any other college boy. Two Playmates were posted on a closet door, and different colored plaid bedspreads added a bright, if not harmonious, look.

After the tape ended, the meeting became more of a gab session than a strategy conference. They talked about the mail they were receiving, which included a telegram from Carl Albert saying that he had watched the show each week from his bed at Bethesda Naval Hospital where he was recovering from a heart attack. Ed said a girl from Carl Albert's paper cup with icewater when the coach yells, "Morris!" And of course during the week, Morris is at the practice field gate. And fraternity brother or no fraternity brother, you'd better have a pass if you want to get in.

Ed and Kathi have been "dropped" since August. "We met three months ago," said Kathi, "when my tennis ball rolled onto his court. That was the last time we played tennis."

Ralph is probably the most self-assured of the group, the acknowledged team leader. His quick, sharp comments spilled into every conversation. The others seemed so accustomed to his "bon mots" that they largely ignored them. Or maybe just tolerated them.

All four chose not to join fraternities. "It's just that I'm a social misfit," said Ralph. What about girls? "Going to New York every weekend has cut us down," said Ralph, "but I still have time for three or four dates a week."

The boys found their classmates' attitudes toward them had changed. "They all speak to me," said Ralph. "They're very friendly and interested. And I am enjoying it. It's nice to be known." But they play down their abilities. "We don't have any more knowledge than anyone else," said Ralph. "What we've done is what anyone could have done had they been coached as we have."

Dr. Morris disagreed. "Not everyone can do it. There are probably many on campus who have the knowledge you have but who don't have the quick recall or ready access to the information you do."

"You have to have certain academic talents," Ralph," said Ed. "There are lots of