A Sooner builder passes

"Uncle Buck" yields to long illness

By Mary McDougall Axelson, in the Oklahoma Daily

The tree has fallen upon the hill
Oh mourn for the oak, the great gray oak!
The tree lies broken there, and still—
Oh mourn for the great gray oak!

The dug-outs knew the great gray oak,
And the covered wagons rolling west—
But the boys and girls who climbed the hill,
Perhaps they knew it best.
The suns swing by, and the rains still fall,
And the winds blow on, across the hill,
And though the great oak is gone,
Our hearts will see it still.

In pride and love our hearts will see
The oak still stands where it stood so long.
For Love is great, and has her will,
And Death is not as strong!

JAMES SHANNON BUCHANAN, for thirty-five years a member of the University of Oklahoma faculty, died March 20 at his home in Norman from a heart attack, aggravated by asthma. He had been ill for the past two years; following a severe attack of his illness at Christmas, he recovered sufficiently to meet his classes again. Several weeks before his death, he was stricken by what proved to be a fatal attack.

Known to thousands of alumni as Uncle Buck or Dean Buck, Doctor Buchanan was perhaps the best known faculty member. His life with the university almost spanned that of the university, having come to Norman from the Central State Teacher's college at Edmond when the university was but four years old, a small territorial school.

He was sixty-six years old.

Classes of the university were dismissed March 21 for his funeral. The university flag flew at half mast, as did the state flag in Oklahoma City by proclamation of Governor Holloway. During the morning hours of that day, his body lay in state in the university auditorium, the stage of which was filled to overflowing with floral tributes of faculty, alumni and friends who had loved and revered him. It was the first university funeral. In the afternoon at 3 o'clock, President Bizzell delivered the funeral address, while the liturgical part of the service was read by Rev. H. J. Bray, pastor of the First Presbyterian church of Norman, in which church Mr Buchanan had been for fifteen years an officer.

The funeral service was marked by the attendance of hundreds of townpeople and faculty members and former students, to pay tribute to the Grand Old Man of Soonerland. Governor Holloway and his staff attended on behalf of the State of Oklahoma. Raymond Tolbert of Oklahoma City, Paul Walker of Oklahoma City and Frank Cleckler, represented the University of Oklahoma Association. Mr. Tolbert sent a floral tribute and a message of condolence to the family.

Active pall bearers were Dr. Edward Everett Dale, 11 arts-sc., Dr. S. W. Reaves, Dr. Gayfree Ellison, Emil R. Kraehtli, H. L. Mordrow and Dr. D. W. Griffin, all of Norman.

"They are not dead who live in the hearts left behind them," quoted Reverend Bray. And that is the measure of Uncle Buck.

Doctor Buchanan was born thirty-two years before the University of Oklahoma was established, on October 14, 1864, at Lebanon, Tennessee. He was born at a time when the outcome of the Civil War was yet in doubt, he lived to see the nation united in the Great War, he lived to serve in a part of the country that was wild and uncivilized at the time of his birth.

He attended Cumberland university and was a freshman there at the time the University of Oklahoma was established, on October 14, 1864, at Lebanon, Tennessee. He was born at a time when the outcome of the Civil War was yet in doubt, he lived to see the nation united in the Great War, he lived to serve in a part of the country that was wild and uncivilized at the time of his birth.

Since 1905 the then President Boyd asked him to come to the university to teach civics and history. There were only five members of the faculty at that time. Only one, Mr F. S. E. Amos of the school of citizenship, is now a member of the faculty.

As the school grew, Doctor Buchanan was found promotion. He was made dean of the college of arts and sciences in 1909, three years after he had served notably in the state constitutional convention. He served as dean of the college for fifteen years, until 1923, when President Stratton D. Brooks resigned. He became acting president during that trying period and the following year, was elected president of the university for the school year, being succeeded by William Bennett Bizzell, then president of Texas Agricultural and Mechanical college. Doctor Buchanan was made vice president of the university, a position he filled until his death.

Kingfisher college recognized his services to the state and to education in conferring on him the degree of doctor of laws.

Doctor Buchanan was married in 1896 to Miss Vinnie Galbraith of Terrell, Texas. Surviving him from this marriage are two sons, James, '24 law, attorney of Barnsdall, and William, a student in the university, and a daughter, Mrs Frances Toombs, '19 mus., of Chicago. Mrs Buchanan died in 1921. In 1924, while president of the university, Doctor Buchanan married Miss Katharyn Osterhaus, '16 arts-sc., of the university high school faculty, who survives him.

He was a member of Phi Beta Kappa, Beta Theta Pi, the Masonic order, and of various learned historical societies. He was an honorary member of the University of Oklahoma Association. November 16, 1929, statehood day, the state historical society which he had helped to nourish during its early days, honored him as one of the four men who had rendered signal service to Oklahoma. The Oklahoma Teachers' association likewise honored him at its state convention held this winter.

No bare recital of facts would ever tell the story of Dean Buck's life. It was too closely intertwined with the lives of Sooner students ever to be set down in cold words. In the finest sense he

(Continued on page 261)
“Come with me with a light heart and I will show you understanding and peace and contentment.”

* * *

SOONER BUILDER PASSES

(Continued from page 236)

Typified the university professor—an able instructor, a trusted friend.

Who is the Sooner who has not a warm spot in his heart for Uncle Buck? No problem was too trivial to receive his earnest consideration, if it was a problem of a student, no problem was too grave for him, when it concerned a student’s happiness.

Thirty-five years of service to Oklahoma—thirty-five years of modest, unassuming, helpful service, the memorial of which is the structure of a university, the immortality of which is a precious shrine of love in countless lives.

* * *

By Governor W. J. Holloway

I am deeply grieved to learn of the death of Doctor Buchanan. His passing is a distinct loss not only to our university but to our state. As a member of the constitutional convention he rendered splendid service in helping to formulate the basic law of Oklahoma. Long prior to that time and since statehood his life and work at the university has been a wonderful asset in the development of Oklahoma. His university life will for many years be a constant inspiration to young men and women of Oklahoma. As governor of the state I have issued an appropriate proclamation expressing the above sentiments for our entire citizenship and out of respect to the memory of Doctor Buchanan have ordered the flag lowered to half mast.

* * *

By Frank N. Watson,
President, O. U. Club of Texas

It is with the deepest sorrow that we learn that death has come to one who has long been enshrined in our hearts. Doctor Buchanan’s years of unselfish service to our Alma Mater played an outstanding part in its success and his lovable loyalty and affection has benignly influenced the life of every Sooner. To the hundreds of us now living in Texas the passing of Uncle Buck comes as a personal sorrow. Will you please convey to his bereaved family, the officials of the university, and the student body our sincere and heartfelt sympathy.