The First Homecoming
Former Alumni President Describes Its Origin

By Fred E. Tarman, '10, Editor, The Norman Transcript

PICTURE a bright, sunny afternoon on October 30, 1915, with Oklahoma opposing Kansas before the largest crowd which up to that year had ever assembled for a football game on old Boyd field.

The first quarter had ended in a scoreless tie, and early in the second period Kansas scored a touchdown and kicked goal. A few minutes later "Spot" Geyer, captain of the Sooners, tossed the pigskin 55 yards to Howard McCasland, substitute end, and McCasland was downed within a few yards of the goal. It was perhaps the longest pass ever completed on Boyd field. McCain went over for the touchdown, the goal was kicked, and the score at the end of the half was 7 to 7.

In the third period Oklahoma got away with more passes, and these, coupled with spirited line backs, brought a second touchdown. Shortly thereafter "Hap" Johnson, Sooner quarterback, received a Kansas punt on the Oklahoma 35-yard line and ran 65 yards for another Oklahoma score. Captain Geyer also booted a field goal from the 42-yard line before the quarter ended, and Oklahoma amassed a total of 23 points. Kansas came back strong in the fourth quarter to score a second touchdown, and the game ended 23 to 14.

That was the first homecoming.

The event recalls striking memories other than the fact that Oklahoma plucked the Jayhawk's tailfeathers. The Sooner eleven won ten notable victories that fall and carved for itself a niche in the hall of gridiron fame as the second all-victorious Oklahoma team coached by Bennie Owen.

The team failed to win eleven games that season only because its first contest, scheduled with Central Normal at the Oklahoma state fair, was rained out. The Sooners opened the season by trouncing Kingfisher 67 to 0, then, in turn triumphed over Southwestern Normal 55 to 0, Northwestern Normal 102 to 0, Missouri 24 to 0, Texas 14 to 13 in a bitter but brilliantly played battle at the Texas State Fair, Kansas 23 to 14, Kendall college 14 to 13 in another hair-raising scrap, Arkansas 23 to 0, Kansas Aggies 21 to 7, and Oklahoma Aggies 26 to 7 in the Thanksgiving day game played at Oklahoma City.

The Texas victory was considered one of the most noteworthy of the year, and the same group of alumni who originated the homecoming idea, together with other campus football enthusiasts, promoted a big barbecue on Boyd field on Monday night following the game. A Texas longhorn steer furnished the "piece de resistance," and a good time was had by all as Edward Everett Dale, one-time cow-puncher, and Roy Hadessell recited impromptu verse and Dr. Stratton D. Brooks and Guy Y. Williams made speeches.

The 1915 team also was a notable aggregation because it included such a large number of men who are classed among the greatest stars developed by Owen on the gridiron. Most of them, too, were playing their last year.

CAPTAIN GEYER was easily the greatest passer ever developed by a Missouri Valley eleven and won all-American recognition that season. Owen had two mighty "sweet" pairs of halfbacks in "Trim" Capshaw and Swatek and McCain and Foster. Capshaw and Swatek were ineligible for the games with Missouri Valley conference elevens but starred in the Texas, Arkansas, Kendall, and Oklahoma Aggie games, while Foster and McCain carried on against Missouri, Kansas, and the Kansas Aggies.

"Hap" Johnson had succeeded "Rip" Montgomery had been relieved by McCasland in the Kansas game only a few minutes before the tall Duncan boy snagged Geyer's 55-yard pass.

"Them Hotts," who exhibited as fierce fighting faces as ever were observed on any gridiron, also were playing their last year with the Sooners. That is, Willie and Oliver, were guard and tackle on the team. Sabert, the third, had wound up his career a year or so previous.

Another interesting co-incidence of the first homecoming was the fact that Oklahoma's most redoubtable enemy in the Kansas ranks was none other than Adrian Lindsey, now head football coach of the Sooners. Coming from the ranks of the foe, Lindsey in his brief career here, has already won for himself a real place in the hearts of Oklahoma alumni as well as university students.

THE time for the fourteenth homecoming approaches, the thoughts of many of the older alumni and former students of the university turn back with interest to the manner in which the homecoming idea first took root and sprouted on the campus.

Homecoming talk was heard among faculty members and Norman alumni as early as 1912, and the Missouri game in 1914 was classified as the homecoming game by the campus newspaper of that time, but formal adoption of the homecoming celebra-
tion as the big event of the year for former students took place the following year and the Kansas game is now generally recognized as the beginning of an event which has grown by leaps and bounds until now thousands of "old grads" and visitors are attracted to the campus each fall.

Numerous alumni and faculty members participated in the preliminary discussions relative to the homecoming plan. Among these were Errett R. Newby, then secretary and registrar of the university, Dr. Guy Y. Williams and Dr. Roy Hadseil, Sooner alumni and faculty members, Ben G. Owen, athletic director, and Tom F. Carey, now president for the second time of the alumni association. To Newby, however, goes the major credit for developing the plan and putting it into effect. The writer, who happened to be president of the alumni association in 1915, helped perfect plans for the celebration after the others had originated the idea.

Newby, who is now secretary of the Buttram Petroleum Corp. of Oklahoma City, discussed the first homecoming recently with the writer.

"We had been trying for years to stimulate interest among the former students and alumni which would bring them back to the campus at least once a year," he said. "Prior to 1915 the principal effort was made at commencement time, with lesser effort at all other important occasions. The result was that no pilgrimage ever proved especially noteworthy, and those who returned for one event missed many old friends who perhaps chose some other occasion to come back.

"Some of the alumni then on the faculty discussed the plan, and I drew up some sketches and presented them to Doctor Brooks, then president of the university, recommending that an annual affair to be known as homecoming be arranged in connection with the main football game each year, and that we make special effort to get back as many former students, alumni, and friends as possible in order that they receive not only the inspiration of a visit to their Alma Mater, but so that they also could have the pleasure that comes from renewing old friendships of college days. No matter what the events of the day might be, they are more enjoyable if shared with old-time friends."

Doctor Brooks approved the plan, the invitations were sent out, and more than 500 alumni and former students were in hand for the celebration. A big snake dance was staged between halves, and an informal reception was held before and after the game in the president's office.

The "pep" demonstration held the night before the game was also a striking event, one that brought stares from the eyes of even the Norman residents, hardened though they were to years of "shirt-tail" parades. It was known as the "periaptetic pajama parade," and the University Oklahoman, student newspaper, reports that university seniors and sophomores wore the flowing robes of Grecian dancers, juniors appeared in flannel pajamas, and the Ruf Neks, who, if memory serves me correctly were first organized in 1915, wore gaudy silk pajamas. The "frosh," the newspaper relates, started a "back to nature" movement, but compromised on "beeveedees."

Then the victory itself called for another big celebration, and a bonfire and "shirt-tail" parade were held on Saturday night. The flames from pine boxes lighted the skies for miles as the tired but happy alumni trekked homeward from Oklahoma's first homecoming.

Errett R. Newby
Of the class of '08, associated with the Buttram Petroleum Corp., as secretary, is the "daddy" of the homecoming idea, says Fred Torman. Mr. Newby was former registrar of the university and is a former president of the alumni association.

University Establishes a Biological Survey

With the creation of the Oklahoma biological survey, a newly established scientific bureau of the University of Oklahoma, the problem of investigating the living resources of the state was included among the functions of the university.

Knowledge of Oklahoma fauna and flora has been increased from time to time in the past by various agencies, however it is only within the last few years that it has been possible to develop a scientific and systematic program for studying the animals and plants of this region. Using as a basis the work done by the department of zoology in conducting summer expeditions into various parts of the state, and of the department of botany in making original studies of the vegetation of Oklahoma, the biological survey has begun its task of collecting and co-ordinating the result of research.

The personnel of the survey is Dr. A. Richards, director; Dr. A. O. Weese, ecologist; Dr. Paul B. Sears, botanist; Dr. R. E. Jeffs, curator of the herbarium; Dr. A. I. Ortenburger, curator of the vertebrates.