Messages and Memories for Homecoming

BY C. ROSS HUME, '98

In going over the papers of my mother last summer, I found a number of letters which had come home during my school days at Norman from 1894 to 1900. Items were mentioned that had long been forgotten, and dates given which fix certain events. These form the messages which will be quoted, and the memories they arouse, which will be given.

The best description of the University at that time is found in the Annual of 1905, written by V. L. Parrington (of the English faculty and later Pulitzer prize winner). It follows:

"As I came on to the campus I stopped—this was the University! The word had always meant—well, something very different to me. A single small red brick building—ugly in its lines and with a wart atop—a short misspelled cross between a cupola and a dome—stood in a grove of tiny elms. Across the front and especially about the door, some ivy had made fine growth and was one restful thing that met my eyes."

In the third year of the University, and the second of this building, my college days were started, in 1894. In giving the recollections, the reader must pardon apparently too much ego, which I shall avoid as far as it is possible.

Catalogues issued during those early years show the following to be the size of the faculty and the student body. The table which follows is compiled from them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>1894-5</th>
<th>1895-6</th>
<th>1896-7</th>
<th>1897-8</th>
<th>1898-9</th>
<th>1899-1900</th>
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<tr>
<td>Number in Faculty</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14</td>
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<td>College Dept. Freshman</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>Junior</td>
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<td>First and Second Year</td>
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<td>121</td>
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<td>148</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>359</td>
<td>374</td>
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</table>

The above table is taken from the catalogues, and shows that during the nineteenth century the great per cent of the enrollment made the University almost the equivalent of a high school. It was necessary that the school be started and the foundation laid for later classes. Another thing to be taken into consideration is that there were few high schools through the territory that could prepare a student for college.

The letters which follow were the inducement that caused me to go to O. U. The first is a letter from Mrs. D. R. Boyd, dated August 16, 1894: "Two Prof's, were elected this week. Prof. Griffin of the Garfield College in Wichita and Prof. Anderson from S. C., will have charge of Latin and Greek."

"The prospect for a full school is quite flattering. If only wheat were some price worth while Mr. B. thinks we could not take care of the number of students. But the hard times will reduce the No. considerably."

A second letter, from President Boyd, dated August 28, 1894, states that "Even though your son should not finish the Freshman Class next year, would he not do better here where he will have such men as instructors? Here we have five college professors teaching the Prep classes. You could not get better opportunities short of the best New England academies. For instance, Prof. Anderson is a graduate of the Univ. of Va., a Fellow from Johns Hopkins and he has had two years in Leipzig, Germany. The only fee will be $3.00 Incidental per semester, instead of $5.00, and you would be recorded from Oklahoma."

From these letters and figures you can imagine the school of my day. There were no traditions to respect; no past to revere; no alumni to spur us on by tales of prowess; no homecoming, because there was no one to come; but an eager, earnest group of young men and women who came into daily contact with the faculty, just one large family.

The earliest message is dated September 9, 1894. "I have decided to study German and my other studies are Vergil, Philosophy and Chemistry. I like the school very well. Next year I think I can finish up even, and after that the course is elective. I have to pay $3.00 per week board. One of the students is about thirty years old and married. School begins at 8:30 in the morning and lasts to 12:30, and we have all afternoon and evening to study." With four studies I had four of the five teachers my first term. My first Incidental Receipt is written and signed by the President, who also taught Philosophy.

"I am going along all right," I wrote September 22, 1894, "and think I will begin College Algebra in a few days, and make up Physics in the next few weeks. Boyd delivered the annual address Thursday evening, and it was very good. We formed a new Literary Society yesterday and the name of it is the Philomathian, and I was elected Prosecuting Attorney and got thirty out of forty-twow votes.

"I am going to study hard this year and next and then go to Ann Arbor if I can, as I do not care for the glory of graduating in the first class of this institution anyhow."

The oldest Literary Society was the Pierian, and this second one was in existence several years. On September 30, 1894, I wrote: "I spoke in a debate Friday night, and it was the first time I ever did such a deed."

Our social life in the school that winter was limited, and memory does not bring back many society events that we enjoyed.

"The basement at the Uni is being completed and will be ready by fall," was the message for May 5, 1895. The Chemistry Lab. was in the west end of the basement, and later Biology in the east end.

"Today is annual commencement, sermon by Rev. Smith of the M. E. at Guthrie, and Tuesday finishes our exams and Wednesday we go home," I wrote May 21, 1895.

No one finished school, and of course no commencement. A trio of women singers came down from Oklahoma City and furnished music for us, and so ended my Freshman year.

October 9, 1895

"We arrived right after last and enrolled yesterday morning. We are boarding at D—at $2.25 per week, making our expenses about $12.00 per month."

September 12, 1895
"The Victoria hotel, the big brick, has fixed up several rooms on the 3rd floor and Ca—and several other boys have gone there. A new man makes rate of $3.00 per week.

"There are three new teachers, Prof. Buchanan will take Griffin's place, Miss Overstreet who takes Amos' place, and Prof. Elder the new Mathematics teacher.

"Boyd has a private secretary who is a shorthand and typewriter. They haven't secured a new music teacher yet, but I intend to start the department as soon as they can find a suitable man."

"Accommodations for students were scarce. The Victoria Hotel, later the Christian Church Building (and now the Public Market), was where we stayed that Fall. Harts and the football players stayed there too and we kept in touch with athletics. This lasted until about Thanksgiving when we were forced to move."

Friday, September 20

"The boys have organized a glee club, orchestra and brass band, and are going to organize a football team next week."

October 2, 1895

"The boys are going to start a football team and are to have their tuition free, also all their expenses paid.

"The band is to be of 18 pieces and I am going to play second cornet. Ray may play tenor or alto. Boyd has secured the instruments and they will be here Friday I expect."

This is as near as the beginning of football can be fixed. As the only tuition was a $3.00 incidental fee per term that was not much of an item, and whether players were hired I cannot say further. At least the band and football team started that fall.

October 13, 1895

"The Uni played a country nine and the score at the end of six innings stood 20 to 7 in favor of the Uni boys."

I recall acting as scorekeeper at the game, and should have retained the score sheet. Harts and Jim Brown were the battery, and Kirkpatrick and Dixon among the players. The field was about one-half mile west of the campus in a meadow. This is the first game of baseball the Uni ever played.

The next message is April 19, 1896.

"I have to sing at a concert given at the Uni chapel and I hope we will have a holiday. Last night the band gave a cantata, but was not much attended and not very good."

There is quite a lapse between this and the next letter. During the Spring there were two graduates in Pharmacy, and Miss Grace King came to start the Music department. No letters the following Fall were found, and the first is dated March 7, 1897.

"As soon as they decide definitely on the cantata will let you know. I have a lot of studying to do next summer. I can arrange it now so I will graduate next year.

"Mr. Shartel of Guthrie will speak the evening of April 22.

"They have a good many trees set out on the Uni grounds during the past two weeks, so I think that in 10 or 15 years the students will be able to study beneath the shade of these experiments."

April 18, 1897

"Have been out five nights the last week with the cantata, and will be out every night this week until Thursday. I can't do justice to my studies so will be glad when this thing is over."

This cantata was "Queen Esther," and a cut of the cast was in a last winter's Sunday Oklahoman. The play was started in the Winter, and many students were in the chorus. It was the most elaborate undertaking of the Music Department, and practice and worry over costumes took much of our time. A solo which I undertook was possibly the beginning of my gray locks.

May 2, 1897

"We expect to go to Purcell Friday night and repeat the cantata, give it here Saturday night again, so I don't expect I will feel very lively.—Friday night Boyd addressed our literary, and we had a fine meeting."

May 9

"We played our Queen Esther at Purcell Friday night and repeated it here last night, and made our expenses which were about $75 or $80. Our receipts for the three nights were a little over $200."

This was the first performance of the Musical Department away from Norman, and we considered it a great success. This is the last note during the Junior year that will be given.

October 2, 1897

"Our board will run from $2.00 to $2.25 per week. I am carrying about 16 hours of study a week with my music."

"Last night I turned over my office of Pres. of Literaty and am quite relieved. I am going to join a dancing club, strictly University and see if I can learn that art."

"They are going to seat the chapel with Opera Chairs so we will all be right."

Mrs. S. R. Hadsell was secretary and I was President for almost a year. Some few years ago we saw the old minute record which showed the nature of the programs presented. The chapel had been started with a combination choir, and we attended chapel each morning from about 9:45 to 10:15 and faculty members and visitors conducted the service. Often we were told of the advantages we had over the speaker of the occasion.

November 7, 1897

"We are going to have a big football game Thanksgiving day here. I have to sing and they may arrange for a concert tour Holidays."

Professor Parrington coached the football team that fall, and it was really the first team of college standing. We later beat Oklahoma City 16 to 0 and evened up the defeat of 1895 of 34 to 0."

November 29

"I was elected Manager of the second football team today. Our first team beat Oklahoma City Thanksgiving by a score of 16 to 0. We have now decided not to have the glee club go to El Reno on Christmas. They want a picture of our quartet in the Holiday number of the Umpire, I am V. Pres. of the Modoc Glee Club—Our Oratorial contest comes off next week Wednesday night."

December 17

"I expect to go to Oklahoma City tomorrow with the football team. They are going to charge an admission at Xmas concert to divide the proceeds among the members of the Glee Club so we will get $3 or $4 at least."

January 2, 1898

"The glee club made a great hit at El Reno Thursday night and at Guthrie Friday night. We won the football game 16 to 8, and the contest at Guthrie, also the declamation contest at El Reno."

The Modoc glee club sang at the Teacher's Convention at El Reno and the next night at the Oratorical Contest at Guthrie with Edmond, Stillwater and Kingfisher participating. This was its first trip from Norman.

January 31, 1898

"Will take 18 hours a week, four more than I need, but Boyd says he will fix it so it will count on my Master's degree. Have begun my oration, and will have a pretty stiff course. I will get extra drill on my oration.—"Our Glee Club is going to Oklahoma City, Guthrie and Perry next month."

February 13

"I have to be excused from class in Argumentation to write Oration. I am going to quit work on The Umpire. Prof. Dyche of K. U. will lecture next Friday night."

The Seniors were expected to furnish an oration as part of the final work, and until about May this was a nightmare to me. The proposed trip of the Glee Club required much practice. As Exchange Editor of The Umpire, first newspaper at the University, the chief implements were scissors and paste. I was correspondent of The Norman Transcript under "Cross Cross" and thus my journalistic career ended.

February 20, 1898

"We are going to play baseball Tuesday, another club. Mrs. Boyd wants me to wear a Cap and Gown during Commencement, and I thought I would
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