Wanted: Oklahomans to invest in culture

By The Editor

In the Alumni News of DePauw university for October, one reads of the following gifts to the university:

1. Mr Frank Hall, a distinguished alumnus of DePauw, gave the school approximately $1,000,000;

2. Mrs Larz Whitcomb of Indianapolis gave $1,000,000 in memory of her husband to establish the Larz Whitcomb chair of sociology;

3. One hundred thousand dollars was given to the board of trustees by various individuals, this sum was matched by a gift of $100,000 by a friend of DePauw, and pledges are being made to complete a sum necessary to erect a new building on the DePauw campus;

4. By the peculiar will of Will H. Latta, an attorney of Indianapolis, DePauw will receive about $17,000,000 in 200 years, from an estate of $50,000 which is to be kept intact for the two centuries at compound interest, and then divided to satisfy certain bequests;

The university will receive during the year more than $18,000 for the Rector scholarships, founded by Edwin Rector, a Chicago philanthropist, a sum sufficient to give scholarships to 519 scholars and a Rector Fellow.

This is, as gifts to education go, not a large showing, but it is remarkable in the number of persons who had DePauw university in mind—who had the well being of Indiana's young people in mind. I say it is not a particularly large total, as gifts to education go. One has but to pick up an alumni magazine of other colleges and universities to note gifts of a million dollars here, two millions there, to the cause of higher education.

What of Oklahoma?

With four notable exceptions—Lew Wentz of Ponca City, Frank Phillips of Bartlesville, E. W. Marland of Ponca City, Frank Buttram, '10 arts-sc., of Oklahoma City—Oklahomans have not yet learned to smooth the path of higher education.

Mr Wentz has established a student loan fund of $125,000 on the University of Oklahoma campus, a loan fund that is proving of incalculable worth to students without sufficient means to go to college. Not a penny has been lost to this fund since its establishment—those who want an education are usually worthy of it.

Mr Phillips has been consistently interested in the University of Oklahoma. His interest has been most marked in the field of history, and a fund he gave to the university has made possible the establishment of a source library of southwestern history. Under the able direction of Mr Edward Everett Dale, '11 arts-sc., in a few more years the university will have probably the most valuable archives of southwestern history—thanks to the thoughtful provision of Mr Phillips.

Messrs Marland and Buttram have subscribed generously to the Oklahoma Union and the Memorial stadium.

Leaving out of the picture for the moment these friends of the University of Oklahoma, what has been the attitude of those in a position to befrend the state's own university? Generally—and sadly for Oklahoma—it has been an attitude of indifference.

This indifferent opinion probably does not spring from any antipathy to the state university; it comes more likely from the attitude that has grown up with the state, let the legislature provide.

We in Oklahoma have passed that stage of development. We passed it with the World War. And because we passed it, and because there did not exist in the state a wholesome attitude of co-operation on the part of the state's leading men of wealth, the University of Oklahoma today is handicapped for buildings and equipment as are few universities in America.

Almost every large university in America numbers in the millions the beneficences to education made by leaders of American commonwealths. These men do not give to the secular school alone. Nevada, to cite but one striking instance, has been the recipient of handsome gifts by the Mackay fortune. Last year, scarcely a month passed but some university announced the gift of a million or more dollars.

At our own university? All was silent. A gallant fight was made for buildings but the state's finances would not allow of more buildings. Ruthless business for the state's own university, but true.

Who should carry on where the state left off?

Oklahoma has more millionaires than any state in the southwest. It has more natural wealth than any mid-continent state. Yet its millionaires have done less for education, measuring their interest as a group, than wealthy men of the east and of the far west.

Our own alumni have contributed in part to this lack of interest. Sooners en masse have been apathetic, indifferent to the welfare of their university. Education for them was free; it cost relatively little. The university was quickly forgotten.

You cannot recall the will of a single Sooner that leaves a beneficence to the University of Oklahoma. Perhaps there may be an exception or two. If so, they are the more notable because of their rarity.

Nor can you recall the will of any Oklahoman of wealth who has remembered in his will the state university.

Oklahoma, blessed in super abundance by nature, is criminally careless of the obligations of higher education.

DePauw is an old and famous school. Until this year it has never produced winning football teams. Football had its proper place in the educational scheme—but it did not predominate. The men who give to DePauw are alumni who love the school; wealthy men who may never have attended a university, who respect what DePauw is doing for young people.

An old building is being torn down at DePauw. Alumni from everywhere are writing in for a brick from the old building. It is the deep attachment motivating that request that is significant. I doubt if there are more than a hundred Sooners who feel such an intense loyalty to their state university. I may be wrong. It may be that there is a latent loyalty as yet untouched.

Football is an incident of higher education. It is a side-show. But in American schools, we put football in the main tent, because our alumni want it there. The enduring things of education are put in the side show. Nebraska alumni refused to tolerate a great coach because he didn't produce winning football teams consistently. If Ad Lindsay should have two years of bad breaks, what would happen to him?

What we need in Oklahoma is some of that spirit of loyalty to true education that actuates the men and women who give to DePauw; to Northwestern; to New York university; to Yale. Millions of dollars have been given to these schools—and millions are being given.

In Oklahoma we need more Lew Wentzes more Frank Phillipses. Without them, we have placed a halter on the progress of our Alma Mater.

We have tethered education because rich Oklahomans build a fence around their money—money from the soil that is the heritage of Oklahomans of this and future generations.