Walter Ferguson, '07

By BENTON, '33

In 1889, a youngster of three
left the covered wagon camp of his pa-
rents and toddled out to discover for him-
self just what this new land of Oklahoma
was all about. He got lost and was lucky
enough, strangely, to stumble into the
camp of the Dalton gang, notorious South-
western bandits. Until well after dark, the
bandits entertained the child, or vice ver-
sa, and they treated him, we suppose, to
a cupper of Mulligan stew. Late that night
the child's father found him. The "des-
erados" escorted both father and son
back to their camp in time to stave off
nervous hysteria on the part of the mother.
The bandits had no thought of robbing
the "Boomers." They were after bigger
fry than mere settlers making the run
into the new territory.
The child was Walter Scott Ferguson,
subject of this piece, and the father was
T. B. Ferguson, who later became gover-
nor of Oklahoma Territory. The incident,
with many others, was used by Edna Fer-
ber in her novel *Cimarron*, which inci-
dents she obtained when she visited "Little
Cim" some forty years later in his home
in Tulsa.

A sketch of Walter Ferguson wouldn't
be complete without this tale. It is typical
of his ability, even at an early age, to
make friends with anyone.

He was born in Sedan, Kansas, in 1886,
made the run with his parents, who set-
tled in Watonga, Oklahoma. There he
simultaneously started to school and to
work—as a devil in the newspaper office.
His childhood can be dismissed with the
story, still current, of an old Watonga
settler warning another not to kill a rat-
tlesnake, "because it might bite that Fer-
guson kid."

Shortly after his father became governor
of the territory, Walter entered for Wentworth Military Academy, and there
received four years of actual education,
graduating in 1906, despite many disci-
plinary measures to prevent it.

In the fall of 1906, he entered the Uni-
versity of Oklahoma, where he was one of
the founders and first president of the
school's first fraternity—Kappa Alpha.

From various sources in Norman, where
the University is located I have been able
to learn that his University education was
more social than scientific and contained
more riot than research.

But there was too much printer's ink
in his blood for a regular academic educa-
tion. His parents founded, and still ran
one of the oldest papers in the territory,
on which he had worked ever since he
could hold a 'stick.' In 1908, he left school
to cover the constitutional convention.
Following this were several reportorial
jobs over the state. And in 1908 he mar-
mixed Lucia Loomis, whom he had met at
the University.

The young couple bought the Cherokee
*Republican* and settled down in this coun-
ty seat town to publish a paper that soon
became known throughout the state.

His entry into politics was easy and
inevitable. He was elected to the state
council and there introduced many of
the state's laws, among which was—of all
things!—the State Bone Dry Law.

In 1920, he sold his paper and moved to
Oklahoma City to enter the advertising
business, at which he did so well that the
largest local bank took over his services
exclusively. In 1921 he was made vice-
president of the institution.

Six active years of banking followed, during which time he was elected to the
state Federal reserve board. In 1927, he
was made vice president of the Exchange
National Bank of Tulsa, now the National
Bank of Tulsa, where the family moved.
Other positions include a directorship in
the M. K. and T. Railroad. And in Au-
gust, he resigned from the bank to accept
a position as executive vice-president of
the Mid-Continent Oil and Gas Associa-
tion, Oklahoma and Kansas division.

His experience in newspapering, politics
and banking has given him probably more
acquaintances than any other man in the
state of Oklahoma, besides a fund of sto-
ries and anecdotes that he ought to put
in print. Who's Who lists him as a mem-
er of the Oklahoma Club, Oklahoma
City, the Tulsa Club, Tulsa, and the
Press Club, Washington, D.C. He tries to
avoid a show about being a K.A. and the
first fraternity man initiated in the state,
but it is a fact in which he takes a secret
pride. He also tries to conceal his pride
in the fact that his wife, Mrs. Walter Fer-
guson, is Scripps-Howard's premier woman
columnist and has one of the largest audi-
ces of any woman writer in the country.

In 1931, at the 25th anniversary of the
founding of Beta Eta of Kappa Alpha,
he was presented with a ring from the
other founders of the chapter, enrolled,
"To the Daddy of Kappa Alpha in Okla-
ahoma." There such facts were brought to
light that he and "Deac" Parker, another
founder (now editor-in-chief of Scripps-
Howard newspapers), had a contract with
the local bartender to sweep out for all
the beer they could drink, and the fact
that the chapter's first presidential chair
was a beer keg. His son was chairman of
the convention committee, and though he
never would admit it, he enjoyed that as
much as the gift of the ring.

At some time or another every man
prominent in politics in the state has felt
the pointedness of his pen or his disarm-
ing sarcasm. He is still more of a country
editor, seeing and knowing everyone and
everything about him, than he is a busi-
ness man, but he has found that this hu-
manization of business pays.

His hobbies include duck hunting—at
the T-Bone ranch near Cherokee, home
of his first triumphs and first friends—bridge,
and his collection. The collection, by the
way, is one of the finest of its kind in the
country. It comprises photographs of every
one prominent in Oklahoma history, let-
ters, journals, many of them unduplicated,
Indian bibles, guns of well-known bandits,
books of cattle brands and rare editions of
Southwestern books.

He is the father of three children: Ben-
ton, twenty-five; Ruth, eighteen and Tom,
twelve. He is well under the control of
Mrs. Ferguson, but, despite opinion to
the contrary, he's the final head of the house.
There's a lot of bluff to him, but he usu-
ally knows a little of what he's talking about,
and he always gets away with it.

To anyone who doesn't know him, he is
guile, capable and callous. And to those
that do know him he's capable and friendly.
Few know him better than I do, for to me he's just the 'old man'—my favorite father.

Davis Visits Pinky Tomlin

Jack Davis, Sooner swimming star, spent
the Christmas holidays as a guest of
Truman "Pinky" Tomlin, '34ex, in
Hollywood. Tomlin, who has appeared in
four motion pictures, is to begin produc-
tion of another movie which he wrote.
He will play the leading part. It is to be
known as "The Arkansas Traveler."

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