

11. Anecdotes and Other Random Bits

Early University Hall Humor

WHO IS RUNNING THE PLACE?-A powerful and effective if somewhat strict President like John C. Futrall couldn't escape from being talked about. Someone, somewhat facetiously, pointed out that Jobelle Holcombe and Julian S. Waterman and Giles E. Ripley really ran the University. It seems that Dean Waterman of the Law School, Physics Head and Dean of Men Ripley and Holcombe of the English Department and the first dean of women served on numerous committees. Holcombe and Ripley were men on the committee for the Semicentennial celebration of 1922. It should have been celebrated in 1921.

NAUGHTY BOYS - Two physics majors were called on the carpet by none other than the



President of the University for creating havoc on campus. They had hook-ed wires to the classroom bell system so that the bells rang not only on the hour as expected but also whenever the water closet in the women's restroom was used. That was easy for a couple of physics majors because the restroom and the clock for the bells were both in the north end of the basement of Old Main. It seems that this really amused President J.

W. Fulbright but he suggested that it would be better if they didn't do this again. This beautiful clock is now displayed on the fifth floor of Old Main, having been renewed by the Wisdom Clock Shop of West Fork in honor of Jack Woody, long-time University treasurer.

NAUGHTY GIRL - One graduate student slipped into the final rough draft of his master's thesis an 8 x 10 photograph of his best friend's girl friend dressed only in a bathing suit. She was sitting on and admiring the x-ray machine used in his research. It really wasn't indecent but when the professor didn't get to the thesis for two or three days this student got very nervous. He thought the ax was going to fall and he was going to fail or be thrown out of school! He couldn't stand it any longer and confessed! No harm done!

NAUGHTY TEACHER - A slide rule at least six feet long used for teaching was supported over the chalk board in the front of the main physics lecture room in University Hall. The young instructor was giving a brilliant demonstration of the methods and tricks of its use for calculations. With his finger securely inserted in the thumb hole in the sliding element, he made a graceful but forceful move and the long wooden piece slid gingerly to the end, impinging his finger most ungracefully against the metal piece holding the whole thing together. It hurt! "Dog gone, class dismissed." The class was dismissed. Charles Oxford's finger hurt! These are the most violent words he is ever reported to have said, right there in the Old Main physics lecture hall. How could anyone amount to anything as a teacher in chemical engineering and a University administrator who didn't cuss and drink and smoke cigars, "dog gone it"?

EARLY ART - The Art Department in the 1930's and 1940's consisted of one professor, Ralph M. Hudson, and a very large room on the top floor of University Hall containing many paintings and supplies and sculptured objects. He and his students painted some beautiful murals on the walls in the dining room of the old Student Union (now Psychology). These were inadvertently painted over and all that remains are some black and white prints made by Bruce Kellar, former assistant registrar.

SOUND - In a letter dated June 21, 1995 from George L. Harvey (B.A. 1938, M.A. 1940), we read this account. "As you know, Dr. Ham's interest was sound. He had several kinds of sound absorbing material mounted on 4' x 8' sheets of plywood which the Building & Grounds people carted around to different buildings and hung on the walls. One of the materials was a decorative tile developed by a local inventor whose name was Heerwagen. . . One of the instruments for detecting sound waves was a phonograph turn-table with a neon bulb mounted on the table. When the sound was initiated, the bulb lit and when the echo was received it lit again and the position of the table at that time indicated elapsed time."



No air conditioning in the physics colloquium Room 117, ca 1962, or is this the regular Tuesday, 4:00 pm "happy hour" in the physics department? The two "happy ones" are George D. Lingelbach and Paul Kuroda from chemistry. Glen T. Clayton is hiding behind

this again. He didn't.

BICYCLE - One professor of physics rode his 1942 Raleigh bicycle up and down the hallway in the basement of Old Main at night to entertain his wife and children. The original owner of this bicycle said that one could get parts for it in civilized states like Illinois but not in Arkansas! He isn't here anymore. Did he know that the plans for Old Main came to the University from the architect who designed an almost identical building for the University of Illinois? It isn't there anymore either.

BRIGHT GIRL - One graduate student was dating a girl he was teaching in his physics laboratory. She was one of the brightest students in the University but he refused to give her an A grade because the other students were teasing him. The professor had to step in and see that she received the A grade she deserved.

X-RAYS - Apparently there was not much x-ray equipment in the hospitals then. Sharrah was surprised one day in the fall of 1942 when two football players and one coed arrived at his laboratory with Doctor's orders for x-rays of their injuries. They didn't seem to be very injured. Sharrah took the x-rays and immediately wrote a memo pointing out that he was not going to do

MISGUIDED GENIUS - Sincere but misinformed would-be inventors are interesting. Perpetual motion again! A beautiful set of drawings of somewhat individualistic style showed how to build a special motor and generator. The physics faculty member was sworn to military secrecy because this motor would drive the generator to produce its own power needs. This would be of great help in the war effort! Quoting such broad principles as "the conservation of energy" and any rot like that was of no avail. We just didn't understand what he was going to do! All of this would work out because the magnetic field in the generator was to be weak with an armature of large radius and the magnetic field in the motor was to be strong and its armature was to have a small radius. Sounds as good as cold fusion, even better!

HOT AIR - A small pamphlet printed in Fayetteville in the middle of WWII pointed out that an airplane or balloon could just hover and let the earth turn around under it. This would be a great saving of fuel and would help win the war. Bible quotations were used to prove that the earth turned around while the atmosphere stood still. Many pilots have read the Bible. Why didn't they know that?

DARK-ROOM PRANKS - In a slightly more humorous vein, three or four physics majors precariously supported a bucket full of water over the dark-room door where Sharrah would be going. He saw the trip cord in time but the students enjoyed talking about the look on his face and the potential for disaster which they had created.

VODKA MAN - This same dark room was used every afternoon as the siesta location for the man who spent several weeks installing the water sprinklers on the fire safety equipment. The professor and these same students went through the darkened areas one afternoon and announced in an official manner that there would be dangerous radiation from a test to be performed on one of the x-ray machines. Then they watched out in the hallway as the water sprinkler man came out from his hiding place to escape this deadly radiation! Later one of the students found an empty vodka bottle where he had been taking his "siesta."

NO CHARLES BOYER - An instructor Jean Camus from France came to teach physics and work with the new Littrow spectrograph. He was a little nervous about teaching. But all was well when he walked into his first college physics class and looked them over and said "you were expecting Charles Boyer, no." But all was not so well with his optics class. He would put two questions on each test and the student would get 100% or 50% or 0%. We tried and tried to get him to develop a broader testing procedure but that was the way someone had done it at the University of Paris and he didn't see any reason to change.

TRAINEES - What other exciting things were going on around the University in those days? The "coeds" were excited when all those healthy young soldiers came to campus in 1943!

BACON, ANYONE? - While there was generally a very strong feeling of patriotism during WWII, there were also many stressful moments, even at home. The nation was running short of trained young people for what was expected to

be a very long war. To help supply this need, students studying technical subjects were frequently deferred from military training if their school work was progressing satisfactorily.

The father talked to the physics instructor and the laboratory instructor and hoped that they would recommend a tutor for his son so that he could remain in school. "The boy's mother would be devastated if he were drafted!" None of this sounded too strange until the father said "I will do anything for you two to help keep our son in school. I own a meat packing plant and can send you all the meat you want!" The two physics instructors were embarrassed and were even more embarrassed when over 50 pounds of bacon came addressed to them at the physics department office in a big greasy box a few days later. They unceremoniously mailed the greasy box with the bacon back to the man at his home address. Meat was heavily rationed and this was all very crude and illegal. The boy did need help and a tutor was supplied but the young immature thing was often seen just walking around in a dream and certainly didn't use his time wisely. His mother loved him.

GLIDERS - There was considerable excitement in the winter of 1943-1944 when a group of army gliders under tow had to make a forced landing in a snow storm! They didn't have the weather channel then. The runways at Drake Field weren't very well developed and they came in from the west and landed heading east. Some telephone wires were struck in this landing but all were safe. They were here for two or three days before getting ready to take off. They headed straight east from the airport, through the valley easily detected there.

CALENDAR ART - Frances Vaile frequently would deliver messages from Dean Nichols. One time she was standing by Dr. Ham's desk waiting patiently for him in his dignified way to sign something. She noticed a new "girlie" calendar lying there on his desk and teased him about the picture. He leaned back in his chair and put his hand on his head in that familiar way and said "by jolly, so it is." She didn't really believe that he hadn't noticed it.

WE NEED TO TALK! - Telephones were only for the elite in the early days of the University. T. C. Carlson kept the overhead down and is reported to have announced that if a professor had something he needed to talk about he could walk over to the other professor's office and talk about it. True, the University was small.

SATELLITES - T. C. Carlson really stirred up the faculty when it was reported in a Little Rock newspaper that he had said that he didn't think that there were any stars among the faculty, only satellites! He was the VP for business, not an academic dean!

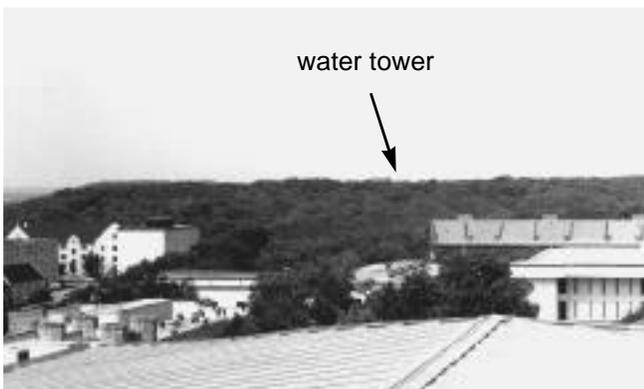


The author and Associate Dean John Hehr in 1995.

A TELEPHONE IN PHYSICS! -

Physics did get a telephone sometime in the early forties or late thirties. It may have been there because Ripley had also served as dean of men. But, be that as it may, Ham would only use the telephone if he absolutely had to. He would write out notes to decide what he was going to

say! Even when physics moved to Dickson street in 1952, there were only three telephone extensions in the building. A buzzer system operated



water tower

from the front office was used to identify incoming calls! It made people jump. Extension telephones were installed in each physics office during the early 1960's.

"BOOM" - As late as the 1940's, one-half of a physics laboratory group went to the top of Old Main while the other half of the group went over on the hill west of the University on Haskel Heights at a point just south of the water tower. The two groups could signal each other with flags or a light colored coat or cloth. The shot had been removed from the shot gun shells and they had been filled with flour to make the moment that the gun was shot visible. The distant viewer would start the stop watch and listen for the boom and stop it, thus getting the basic information for determining directly the velocity of sound. The distance was about 5300 feet so that the time was almost five seconds. Measurements were made both directions to help compensate for any wind. This was always an interesting laboratory but some students wanted to look over the edge of the building and that was the principal reason that we started using a measured distance out at the Agriculture Farm instead of the neat roof laboratory setting! These pictures of the location were taken in July, 1995. In fact, a test shot showing the flour exiting a gun was made at a local shooting range

SAD STORY - Not so funny was the fact that an electrical engineering professor was here only one year because it was found that his credentials had been falsified. The University even made LIFE Magazine! And to think, Paul Sharrah and H. M. Schwartz were looking over a paper on contact potentials which he had submitted for publication in the Arkansas Academy of Science Journal! The paper wasn't all that bad. The guy had studied a lot but just hadn't taken time to complete any of his claimed degrees. He was using the file of college records and recommendations for an entirely different person!

"IT BROKE" - A small special grant of money permitted physics to buy a used x-ray diffraction tube. The tube arrived in perfect condition. The day it arrived the graduate student mount-

ed it in the x-ray machine, only to announce to the professor a few minutes later that "it broke." "It broke" all right because he had tightened the centering screws too much.

NEAT WORK? - He was well trained in the classical electronic circuit wiring of the period. He worked for several hours one afternoon and came proudly to the professor's office to have him come to see the finished project. All was beautiful, but it is a good thing that he hadn't turned it on. The high voltage wire from the 50,000 volt x-ray transformer was also neatly routed through the bundle with all the normal low-voltage wires! If this anecdote doesn't shock you, you also should stay away from electrical wires.

CHEAT SHEETS - Not so funny was the clever cheating scheme two students devised. It was a multiple choice test and one was going to work on the first twenty questions while the other worked on the other twenty questions. Two small sheets of paper with question numbers one through twenty and twenty-one through forty were hurriedly being prepared. Then they would exchange these sheets of paper with their best efforts for the other to answer the questions he was not sure about and had left blank. In the end they would both pass! They almost fainted when the professor just picked up the two pieces of paper even before the test had started and told them that they knew better than to do that!

FIRE !- Fire had destroyed several of the early buildings including one of the wooden structures used by physics. When a fire started in one of the upper floors in the north end of University Hall sometime in the late thirties or early forties, Dr. Ham and several students had almost all of the physics teaching equipment moved out onto the lawn by the time the fire was extinguished!

CENSORED - One morning the news came from somewhere that a certain economics text being used at the University was to be investigated. That was when there was much socialism and communism scare! Later that day President

Lewis Webster Jones announced that he had reviewed the book and found it to be academically and scholarly sound. No further questions were brought up about the book.

LOST & FOUND - A nervous call came from a local insurance man. A doctor at Prairie Grove had misplaced his small radium needle. Could we help find it? At that time the only radiation detection equipment on campus was a very early crude Geiger-Mueller system. It was heavy and required alternating current power. The Fayetteville fire department had just purchased a "small" electric generator. So off to Prairie Grove we went with all of this in the trunk of the insurance man's new car. There was no radiation detected in the doctor's office nor in the barrel behind the office where they burned stuff. He remembered that they had taken some trash to the city dump a few days earlier. Twenty feet from the dump the radiation was detected in the ear phones and in a few minutes it was located two or three feet down in the debris. It was still attached to the piece of adhesive tape that had been used to secure it to the patient. This whole thing was such a big deal then that Bill Good, the president's news officer, placed a whole column about the incident in the student newspaper.

LOST & FOUND AGAIN - But what makes all of the above even more hilarious, the same telephone call came almost exactly a year later! So we went to Prairie Grove and found the radium again, but we had made some progress because small portable battery-operated radiation detectors had been purchased by the chemistry department. Again the radium needle was adhering to a piece of adhesive tape but it hadn't gone any farther than the trash barrel located behind the doctor's office. We didn't make the newspaper this time, but the insurance company did pay a small consulting fee both times.

"HEAVY" - Someone just used the expression today "he is a heavy!" My mind jumped back to a sunny cool day ca 1950. Dr. L. B. Ham and I were walking down the hill south of Old Main again, having been "invited" to go to Dr. Griegorieff's office for a conference. Ham turned and remarked that they wanted to see

how they can help physics. That remark was followed by a chuckle and a smile as he looked at Sharrah. We went to the meeting. They did nothing for physics. We were asked again to do something, I forget what, for the IST. "Heavy!" Ham was amused. I wasn't.

Dickson Street

NO PARKING - There was beautiful grass in the enclosure behind the new U-shaped physics building on Dickson Street in 1952. The chairman of the University parking committee held out for over a year before he would permit that space to be used as designated parking. The physics people could have used it for croquet at noon?

FRISBEE, ANYONE? - One Monday morning before the department chairman even had time to open his brief case, an irate heating plant engineer arrived at the physics office to complain that the graduate students had been playing with a frisbee in the physics parking lot and had accidentally struck his new automobile. Bad students! They especially liked to skip the frisbee off the nicely polished concrete floor in the hallway. Bad students!

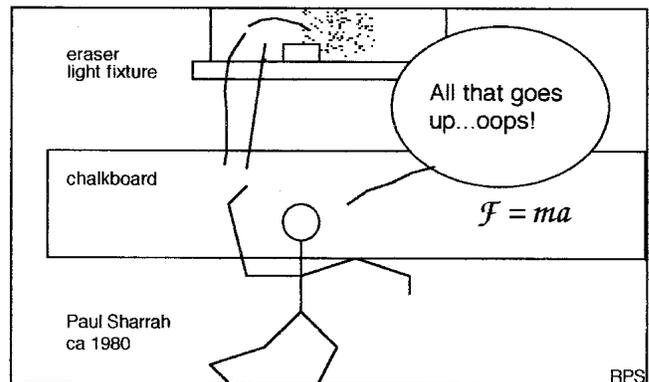
VALET PARKING? - These same students managed to get Zinke's small French car into the basement of physics. It was waiting for him there in front of the refreshment machine after the weekly physics colloquium was over. He had to remove a post in the double door to get it back out of the door. They helped him. They knew how to remove the center post in the door.

ATTENTION! - One student who was a returning veteran came to class regularly wearing army fatigues with a service revolver stored in one of his deep pockets. He showed it to the teacher and explained that he didn't want to leave it in his room because he was afraid that it might be stolen. Another student came to class regularly with his pet snake tucked into the deep pocket of his army fatigues.

TRAINING? - Personal hobbies and professional activities often overlap. Students learn electronics and shop practices and computers and

other valuable skills even while working on personal projects. Building a speaker system and a small sail boat didn't seem too far afield for a physics major, but when greasy automobile transmission and engine overhaul work appeared in the shop, it was time for another one of Sharrah's memos!

GRADUATE STUDENTS PLAY WITH BLOCKS - One Monday morning the department chairman arrived in the building only to find that half of the concrete blocks waiting to be used in a new wall were missing. While the chairman was



having all kinds of bad thoughts and trying to decide what steps to take, a loud guffaw came from Zinke's office. When Zinke opened his office door he was faced by a solid wall of concrete blocks all the way from the floor to the ceiling. These blocks completely closed up the entrance to his office! Bad students! The chairman was relieved that the blocks hadn't been stolen and Zinke thought it was a great joke.

"ARMY INTELLIGENCE?" - "I have a "D" in your physics class. I understand everything but don't understand the problems."

"Yes, your grade is D according to the scores here in my record book."

"I am afraid that you may give me an F at the end of the semester."

The professor noted the "give me" term but made no comment. "What is your major and what do you plan to do when you finish school?"

"I think that I want to go into army intelligence."

Yes, readers, that is what the student said! "Army intelligence!" God help us.

BEWARE - A distinguished professor from Brown University, Dr. R. B. Lindsay, came in the summer of 1963 to speak to the AEC/NSF summer science institute group. He rode the train from Providence, Rhode Island to Tulsa, Okla. The operative word is Oklahoma. He was afraid of airplanes and his elderly Canadian born mother warned her sixty year old son to be careful about the outlaws and the Indians in that wild Oklahoma country! That was 1963!

ALL THAT GOES UP!?! - Sharrah was trying to get the attention of the students in the college physics class. He made the brilliant statement "that everything that goes up comes down." He threw an eraser upward and it miraculously landed precisely on the edge of one of the overhead light fixtures and didn't come down. Sharrah was puzzled but he got their attention. The class roared with laughter. Some workman must have been surprised when he found that eraser sitting there on the top of that light fixture when the remodeling was taking place in 1992.

SHARRAH'S EGO PROBLEM - He had been bragging that he could work all the problems in any of the introductory physics books. One day George D. Lingelbach was ill and Sharrah was called in at the last minute to teach his college physics class. The students wanted to have a few problems solved before they took the quiz and the substitute teacher was obviously uncertain about how to proceed on the very first one requested. It was a problem in classical geometric optics about the tracing of a ray of light through an ice crystal or something like that in Harvey White's book. The students were somewhat amused at Sharrah's floundering, especially the very bright daughter of one of the engineering professors. She promptly told her father, Professor Chris Wray, about this event and the story came back to the somewhat dismayed physics professor many times during the next few days. "Take heed!"

ACT 10, BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING - On a slightly more serious note, in 1958 all of us suddenly found that we had to make a list of all the

organizations to which we belonged or had made financial contributions. All of them! It was that ridiculous ACT 10! (Ref.3-p. 199) Three or four people resigned from the University. The national organization of the American Association of University Professors censored the University. Everyone complained. University Vice President and Secretary of the Board of Trustees James W. Pomfret called someone in Little Rock and asked them what he was to do with the signed forms. They said they didn't know. He placed them in a vault and they were never called for. ACT 10 was finally nullified.

SAVED BY THE TELEPHONE - One Saturday morning Sharrah was busily engaged in mowing the lawn. A telephone call came from a student saying "aren't we supposed to have a final examination in physics this morning?" Sharrah was in the building in nine minutes.

At least half of the class was not visible. One student asked what would be done about the students who had already gone. Sharrah's answer was that a failing grade would be sent in for all of them. He didn't have time right then to read the rules. Within ten minutes all of the students were at their places! The message traveled fast.

After everything was under way, the professor looked over the final he had put together the day before and announced that one part, approximately one half, would be omitted because of the time lost. All were happy and a catastrophe was avoided.

The same professor mowed his yard right through a commencement ceremony one Saturday, but that was no catastrophe!

NO REST FOR THE WEARY - Sharrah placed a cot in the storage room back of the acoustics laboratory where he could take a short nap at noon. He found out that the acoustics room was where the secretaries ate their noon snack lunch. He only took a nap there once!

SHE'S NO DUMMY - One very young high-school student was employed one summer as a typist. Each typing job was finished precisely when the bells rang so that she could go out in the hall to watch the boys walk by!

BOOK WORM - One chairman of the physics library committee couldn't see why anyone would need a dictionary. He said that if anyone needed to know about a word, just ask him about it. This is the same person who kept physics library books in his office so that they wouldn't be stolen.

"SHAPELY" SHAPLEY - When astronomer Harlow Shapley lectured to the various groups at the University, he would assist the person introducing him with the pronunciation of his name. "A movie star may be shapely but I am Shapley."

He also told another interesting story. Some politician was insisting that any individual who possessed any amount of radioactive material must report it to the government. Professor Shapley was one of the scientists advising the group drawing up the legislation and he brought a piece of granite to the hearing and placed it on the table. When he demonstrated that low level radiation was in the granite and in many other objects in nature, the proposed legislation had to be seriously modified.

Professor Shapley also claimed that he put the "S" in UNESCO. A committee was trying to decide what to call the new organization and at first it was merely UNECO, but that was hard to pronounce. So Shapley suggested that it include science and be called the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization! Thus we have UNESCO to this day!

YOU DON'T DRINK!?! - The physics department chairmen in the 1960's was a teetotaler with respect to alcohol. This was really no problem and most people seemed to admire someone who knew how not to merely drift along with the mob and the commercials! But of course two of the rather outspoken faculty members would make odd comments to each other about this. One even went so far as to say one time when he was excited at a physics faculty meeting that "we are not running a Sunday School here."

AGING - After Sharrah passed 70 years of age both of these professors became more friendly and one of them especially seemed suddenly to mellow and be rather awed at Sharrah's general

conditions of good health and happiness! He quietly and courteously one time asked if this habit of avoiding alcohol was a religious thing or what. Sharrah answered that it might have been a religious thing at first but later he decided that he didn't really need alcohol anyway.

SIX PACK - While on this topic, one of these professors was rewarding a small group of the bright physics majors for some activity and thought it was smart to present each of them a "six pack" of beer. Two of these good looking bright boys politely turned down the "six packs" stating that they didn't drink alcohol. The professor suddenly became very humble and said he would bring them a carton of their favorite soft drink tomorrow.

APPLE JUICE - While on this kick, another "friend" told the waiter at a nice German restaurant in New York to bring beer instead of apple juice for Sharrah. Yours truly smelled the stuff and put it aside. How Zinke liked to tell that story on Sharrah!

DEMOCRACY AT WORK - The first physics chairman wanted a soft drink machine and a candy machine and a milk machine placed in physics. The faculty in a straw vote turned down the idea. He had a soft drink machine and a candy machine and a milk machine installed the next week! He was chairman for twelve long years!

YOU COULD BE SUED FOR THAT "I" - Be careful, you might be taken seriously. Sensing her keen sense of humor, he said to one of the girls in his office, "If your mother is anything like you, I would like to meet her." Two or three months later two mothers showed up at the professor's office. With a clever smile, one mother asked, "Am I anything like my daughter?" It was all in fun and with good taste! It is possible for members of the opposite sex to be friends and show respect for each other as persons. I learned this from my father, a Baptist minister.

YOU COULD BE SUED FOR THAT "II" - The professor told the class jokingly, "Yes, I take bribes, like Cokes or Milky Way candy bars, or even your

home work!" One summer, a student whose parents owned a grocery store, brought the professor a box with several Milky Way candy bars. She begged him not to tell the other students so that she would not be teased. All of us in physics enjoyed Milky Way candy bars that week and the student enjoyed giving them!

LOST AND FOUND - John I. Petz's thesis advisor left the rough draft of his thesis in a taxi going from the railroad station to the airport in St. Louis. A nervous call from the Washington, D. C. airport verified that the thesis had been found and that it was being held at the office of the taxi company. They were very helpful and brought it to the St. Louis airport and handed it to Sharrah on his return trip three or four days later, at no charge! This was before word processors so that there was only one copy with no back-up method, except notes and memory and carbon copies!

CAR THEFT - Not so lucky was Charles Armentrout. His thesis and loaded Volkswagen were stolen from a motel parking lot when he and his wife were returning to Fayetteville after visiting their parents during the mid-year break. It was never to be found! He had to write his thesis again merely from notes and memory. He made it.

QUIET MOTOR - One physics professor carefully locked and secured his new used car in the lot behind physics about mid morning. When he came out of the building at noon to go home for lunch his automobile engine was still running. Quiet motor!

WRONG WORD - Someone calling in for an appointment to bring a group to visit the planetarium asked just where the plants, yes plants, were stored. We didn't have room for the planets either!

WRONG NUMBER - Teacher, "Can we bring 150 students on a field trip to the planetarium Friday?"

Planetarium secretary, "Yes, that time is open."

Teacher, "We will be there in three buses about noon Friday, OK?"

Secretary, "OK, see you then. I will alert the planetarium demonstrators that you are coming."

One hundred fifty students from Springdale showed up at noon on Friday in the hallway of the physics building trying to enter the Spitz A1 planetarium which had a capacity of only twenty five students!

The telephone conversation had been with the planetarium at UALR and no word in the conversation had made that clear.

"Wrong number."

And this was one of the rare times when Sharrah and his wife had tried to go out for a quiet noon meal together. Sharrah returned to the building to find Lisa Lovett pulling out her hair and the teacher with the 150 students asking us why we had let them come here! Soon the error was figured out and everyone returned happy, I think.

RIGHT CHOICE OF WORDS - Herman Schwartz walked into Sharrah's office one morning when Sharrah was still department chairman and said that he thought he had found a fairly bright student in his advanced physics course. That was quite a positive statement for Schwartz. "Who is he," Sharrah asked. "I believe his name is Carl Rutledge," Schwartz said. Sharrah smiled slightly. Schwartz asked him why he was smiling. Sharrah informed him that was the young man who was going to marry his daughter in a



few days. Then Schwartz smiled, shifted back and forth on his two feet a couple of times and said cheerfully, "I finally said the right thing for once!!"

UP IN THE AIR - The students jacked up both rear wheels on a very new car belonging to the research services shop man, George Kirsch. He was shocked and a little mad because his car wouldn't move when he was ready to go home at noon. He got over it.

COME FLY WITH ME - The physics shop man, Frank Sperandio III, did a thorough and professional job of rebuilding an old air plane in 1992 and 1993. Sharrah loaned him an interesting old book about airplanes. Frank was so pleased that he graciously offered to take Sharrah up with him in its maiden flight. Sharrah graciously turned him down but said that he would take all kinds of video pictures of the whole thing!

"REALLY?" - I am so glad you told me how to see the artificial satellites. I heard one go over last night.

PLANETARIUM HUMOR - "Did you see the comet?" "No, I had to work that night." How do I explain to the wise guy that if a comet is visible at all it should be visible many nights! A comet is not a meteor!

CHOICE WORDS- Marion Harris, secretary to the Vice President for Academic Affairs, asked the somewhat tense faculty woman to have a seat and said that Dr. Oxford would be with her in a few minutes. In a few minutes the nervous faculty woman was entering Dr. Oxford's office and was heard to say, "I thought you would be older!" to which Dr. Oxford replied, "Maybe I am!"

GOOD RETIREMENT PLAN - One student coerced his laboratory partner to do it! Poke your head into Professor Sharrah's office when you finish laboratory today and yell "Doesn't the University have a good retirement plan?" He did it, but didn't know that he had been recognized. A few days later Sharrah looked at him during the middle of the University Physics lec-

ture up in Kimple Hall and answered, "Yes, the University does have a good retirement plan." The young student was caught, and tried to crawl under the seat. We survived and one of us retired soon.



A study in Chaos

PROJECTS IN THE ELEMENTARY PHYSICS LABORATORY - IT SEEMED LIKE A GOOD PLAN - It was a good idea, I thought. Students often hurried and finished laboratory in an hour and went home. The laboratory assistants often cooperated with that "escape" from learning as it would have made extra work for them also. We would buy some specialized equipment and have each student work on his own project for the semester also. It just didn't work, except for the honors laboratory, possibly. Part of the problem was that we did not give enough training to the assistants. Many of the assistants had never seen those experiments either. The equipment was used effectively in other ways but not as was originally proposed.

\$500 FURNACE TRASHED - Paul Agron and Paul Sharrah went in to the Oak Ridge National Laboratory on a Saturday morning in 1954 to clean up a beryllium furnace element that had been damaged on Friday. Sharrah carefully laid it in the waste basket to dry, and the building custodian dutifully emptied all of the trash baskets into the dumpsters behind the chemistry building. Agron and Sharrah spent two or three hours Monday moving all of the trash around in these two dumpsters but could not find the lit-

tle furnace element. Thus being eager and careless on that Saturday morning caused a delay of two weeks while the shop made another one of those beryllium shields for the sample area in the furnace used on the x-ray machine for the study of liquid metals.

LONG MEMOS - LITTLE IMPACT - The dean of engineering asked physics why so much time had to be spent on a useless subject like optics in the university physics course. All of the physics faculty was overloaded and Sharrah took it upon himself to write a long rambling memo trying to explain that physics tried to be an all inclusive subject and avoid fads. The memo was too long and the dean didn't ever read it.

What makes this more ironic was the fact that optics was on the verge of a big explosion as the laser was just coming into existence at that very moment. One could scarcely imagine the impact this development would have on modern optics!

MASTER KEY - One graduate student was in a hurry to leave town at the end of his stay at Arkansas and rushed in the physics office and gave all his building keys to the physics chairman and asked him if he would turn them in to the physical plant office. The student apparently forgot that these keys included a home made physics building master he had cleverly manufactured. These are normally available only to custodians.

CONFUSED - One expert on chaotic phenomena submitted a list of a few chaotically selected references to articles on non-linearity and deterministic chaos.

MEMO NEEDED! - When Professor Davis Richardson of the mathematics department took early retirement in 1967, it suddenly became apparent that the descriptive astronomy course was about to become extinct. No one in the mathematics department wanted to teach it and

the physics department couldn't find anyone in the administration who was going to make a decision about it. Everyone seemed to have the title of "acting" that year. Finally, with Vice President Pilcher's encouragement, we decided to go ahead and list it and teach it. We had already been making good use of the planetarium for several years but even then a few members of the physics faculty wondered if we needed any more general service courses. But this was the beginning, even if somewhat unofficially, of a nice addition to physics.

ANNUAL REPORTS ARE ALL ALIKE -The annual reports of the departments to the dean are excellent historical documents. But in some respects, they all sound the same. The department needs more space, the department needs two or three more professional physicists now to properly handle the teaching load and adequately develop the research program. These kind of words appear in all of the annual reports. Also there is almost always the statement that these are exciting times and there is a firm belief that things are going to improve! Also in spite of all these hardships the staff has done excellent work!

WHAT IS THE GOOD WORD? - In the 1960's the term "expanding program" was used over and over to describe the physics department and the term "young and vigorous" was used over and over to describe the faculty. In the 1990's the term is "small and vigorous."

APPOINTMENT! - The pay checks for the summer institute staff had all been delivered. The director was leaving on a vacation trip with his family in the short time available between the summer session and the beginning of the fall session but his check did not arrive. He had appointed all of the institute staff except himself!

He went to the office of the Vice President for Fiscal Affairs and explained his plight to Fred

S. Vorsanger. The check was made available within the hour. That was before computers had taken over to speed things up!

Vice President Vorsanger did put a slight scare into the institute director by asking him how he was supposed to know that he had actually done any work! Bad joke.

MERIT RATING - Sharrah, with a twinkle in his eye, tells the present and former chairmen, "I have observed the operation of this department over the years and have seen the quality of the leadership steadily going down!"

Lieber responds quickly, "Does your reference point go back to Ham?"

A Few Choice Student Excuses, etc. Recalled

MEET ME IN NEW ORLEANS - I will have to take the final examination some other time. My mother has sent me some airline tickets and I have to meet her in New Orleans that day to fly to the Bahamas for a Christmas vacation.

PLEASE TAKE MY FINAL FOR ME - That boy didn't belong there ready to take the final examination in physical science. He was sitting in for a fraternity brother who had called him to tell him that his car had broken down and he couldn't make it back to Fayetteville. He didn't want his parents to know that he had been out traveling around somewhere in Arkansas when he should have been studying for the final examinations.

And to make it even more bizarre, the willing if stupid boy sitting there ready to take the examination for the other stupid kid hadn't even asked him who the instructor was, only where the examination was being given and the time. He did wake up when he saw who the teacher was and came down and apologized. And to think, the willing student and the professor both attended the same church activities in Fayetteville. Apparently that church hadn't impressed any concepts of honest conduct in daily life on this student!

DENTIST APPOINTMENT - I only wish I had kept accurate records. The excuse given so often by the student was that he had a dentist's appointment at that time.

I HAVE TO BE IN COURT - Not quite as often but not negligible was the "I have to be in

court" excuse. One student had accidentally discharged a gun and injured a "friend" in the leg. The "friend" sued him for something and he had "to be in court."

I DIDN'T HEAR THE ALARM - Students often slept through the alarm.

Professors can have that happen to them also. On my first teaching job at William Jewell College I was two minutes late one morning to a mathematics class I was teaching. Hurrying up the back stairs to save time entering the building the class was caught attempting to walk out "en masse." They walked back to class. Walking out of class when the instructor was late was a much used trick in those days.

MY FRIEND IS GETTING MARRIED - As time went on most of the faculty became fairly lenient with this "excuse"!

MY BATTERY RAN DOWN - My calculator won't work.

MY BATTERY RAN DOWN - My car wouldn't start.