

# Oral Roberts College Has Grown in 7 Years

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TULSA, Okla., June 12—The president is a former tent evangelist and faith healer who never finished college. Faculty members are picked for their religious beliefs as well as their academic credentials. The central structure on campus is not a library but a shiny 200-foot space needle known as the Prayer Tower.

Under ordinary circumstances such ingredients would not seem conducive to the building of a major academic institution. But in the seven years since it opened its doors on 260 acres of farmland on the southern rim of Tulsa, Oral Roberts University has demonstrated that it is no ordinary institution.

Backed by the multimillion-dollar Oral Roberts Evangelis-

tic Association and spurred by publicity from its nationally ranked basketball team, the coeducational liberal arts university has already grown from 300 to 1,800 students, earned a national reputation and built what will soon be a \$48-million physical plant.

### Technological Pioneer

The school has staked out a claim as one of a handful of major pioneers in the use of educational technology. Last year—only a year after the minimum waiting period for new institutions—it surprised skeptics by gaining full academic accreditation from the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools.

Forty per cent of the 85 faculty members have earned their doctorates and although the school now gives only Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Science degrees—graduate programs have been post-

poned until the undergraduate program is stabilized—there are long-term plans for graduate programs in theology, education and business.

But perhaps most surprising, Oral Roberts has demonstrated that it is possible to run a modern university under traditional disciplinary methods and values.

Students are required to dress neatly, attend chapel and church and refrain from drinking, smoking and dancing on campus. They say "yes sir" to elders and astonish visiting teams by applauding when the visitors do well. Demonstrations are unknown, and those who dissent from administration policies are invited to leave.

"We make no bones about O.R.U. being for everyone," said Carl H. Hamilton, vice president for academic affairs, in an interview. "We take an in loco parentis approach and only want stu-

dents here who accept our Christian life style."

Most students do, and many will tell you that in coming to Oral Roberts they have not only enrolled in an educational institution but joined a righteous cause. "It sounds crazy, but the feeling around here is glorious," said Gordon Schultz, a 20-year-old from Buffalo. "You feel that God is here."

### Founded by Preacher

The institution was founded by Oral Roberts, a 54-year-old Pentecostal preacher who during nearly two decades as a tent preacher achieved an international reputation for healing through prayer and the laying-on of hands.

Mr. Roberts says that the university was established to institutionalize and extend his preaching and healing ministry. Its basic philosophy is that education involves



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growth of the "whole man"—body, mind and spirit.

The evangelist, who recently joined the Methodist Church, is clearly the boss on campus. Despite a heavy television schedule, he involves himself in all major decisions and he even recruits players for the basketball team. Small signs on walls and desks carry optimistic slogans that he has made famous, such as "Expect A Miracle" and "Something GOOD Is Going to Happen to You."

The rapid growth of the university at a time when most existing private institutions are cutting back on expenses has been made possible by its special financial base, which is as broad as it is unconventional.

### \$5 Contributions

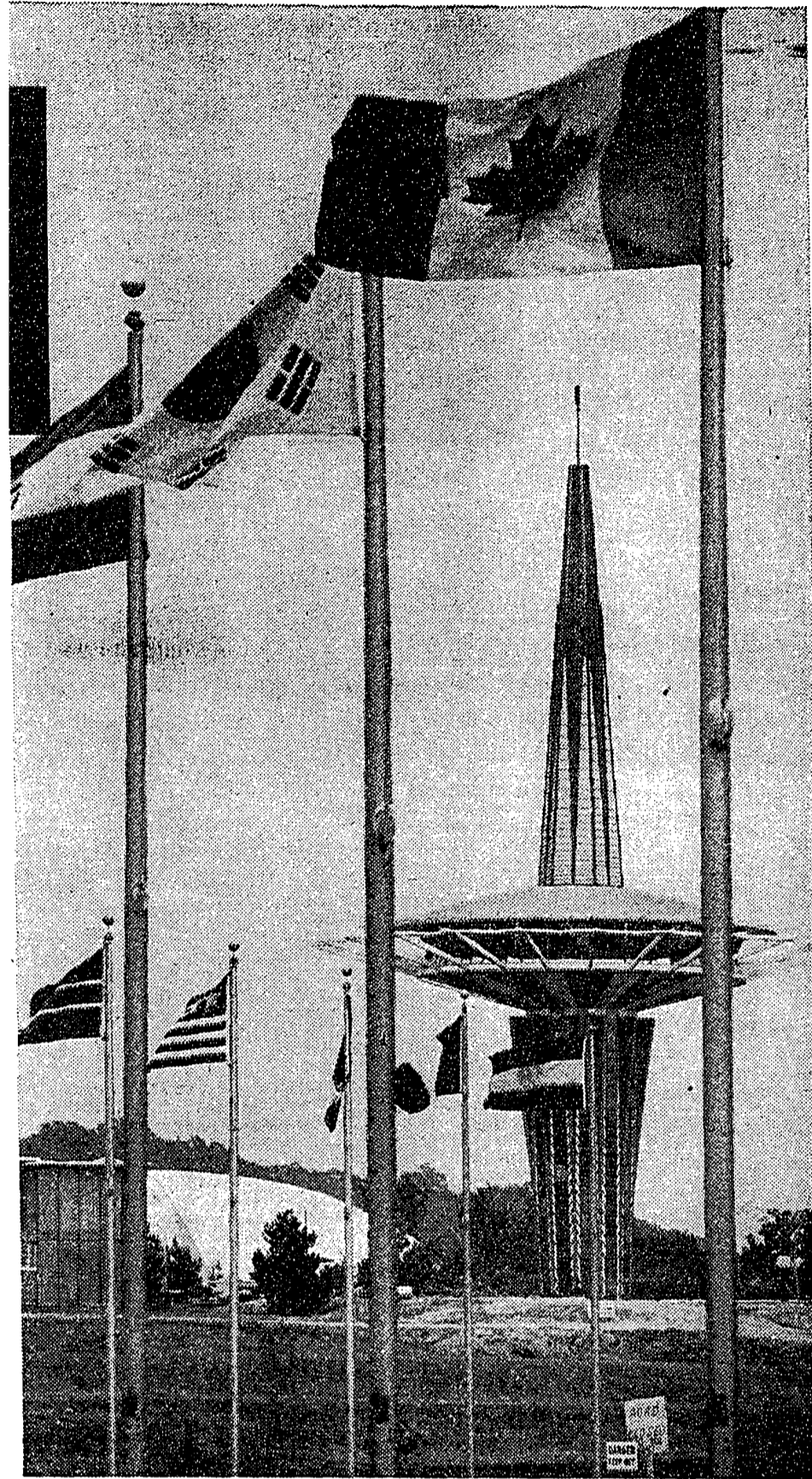
Sixty per cent of the \$4.6-million annual operating budget and nearly all capital funds come from the Oral Roberts Evangelistic Association, a nonprofit organization that coordinates Mr. Roberts's television and publishing activities. Its hundreds of thousands of supporters, or "partners," generate an annual cash flow of about \$17-million, mostly in contributions of under \$5.

The academic program, which was originally designed by John D. Messick, a former president of Eastern Carolina College, revolves around a six-story Learning Center that includes a library with 176,000 items and classrooms equipped with modern elaborate technological resources.

In a report that was released earlier this month the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education called such methods "the first great technological revolution [in education] in five centuries." It urged the Federal Government to begin subsidizing the development of educational technology.

Though the financial base of the Oral Roberts Association has freed the school from many of the headaches of other private institutions, the rapid build-up and distinct character of the school have brought their own difficulties.

The initial problem—public awareness of its existence—has been solved largely by



The New York Times/Gary Calbeck  
The central structure at Oral Roberts University in Tulsa, Okla., is a 200-foot Prayer Tower, which was designed to symbolize a 20th-century cross with a crown of thorns.

Mr. Roberts's recent plunge into major television specials—a \$3-million gamble—and by the creation of a basketball team that last year led major colleges in scoring.

"It used to be that I couldn't even get into good private schools to talk to prospective students," said Charles Ramsay Jr., director of admissions. "Now when I walk in a secretary is apt to ask how the team did last night."

Students gripe about the strictness of the dress code and curfew for coeds, and no

one knows how much violation of the drinking and smoking regulations goes on off campus. Certainly there is some.

Such problems are minimized, though, by the fact that many students come from backgrounds where such standards are the norm. Two out of five come from Holiness or Pentecostal families, and almost all are evangelical Christians.

The basketball players, almost all of whom are black, have occasionally complained about the excessive evange-

listic zeal of some students, but most say they like the nearly all-white campus because race relations are good.

"It was strange at first to have white people coming up and calling me brother," said Haywood Hill, a former starter from Manhattan whose scholarship has been continued even though his eligibility has been used up.

At the outset, members of the academic community, as well as most citizens of Tulsa, expressed doubt that a tent preacher would establish a quality school, but most have changed their minds. "They didn't hesitate to get good professional advice. They have come along well," said Robert Kamm, president of Oklahoma State University.

Faculty members are expected to be evangelical Christians and share Mr. Roberts's basic philosophy, but this has posed no prob-

lems of academic freedom. Edward N. Nelson, a professor of zoology, noted that in a sensitive area such as evolution he teaches "the same way I did at state schools."

University officials say that the remarkable success of the university is partly a result of good timing. "In the nineteen-sixties when the university was being planned there was a surge of support in the country for higher education," said Mr. Hamilton.

"Now there's a climate of anti-intellectualism in the country that would make this difficult, but there's also a surge of interest in Oral Roberts and good support for institutions that are willing to take the firm Christian stance we do," he said.

But others see a different explanation. "You look at this university and figure that seven years ago it was farmland," said Kenneth Trickey, the athletic director and basketball coach. "To me it's just a miracle. You ask how it came about. I just have to say the Lord did it."

