

DR. AND MRS. ROY GITTINGER

By Jo H. Hoskinson

Information from Dorothy Gittinger (Mrs. Harold E. Mutnick)

Dr. Roy Gittinger, author, historian, and emeritus professor of history in the University, and Mrs. *Franc Price Gittinger, came to Norman in March 1901, to enter the University of Oklahoma. In 1902 he became a history teacher.

Dr. Gittinger died in October 1957. Mrs. Gittinger now in her 93rd year lives near her daughter, Mrs. Dorothy Mutnick in Lafayette, California.

The Gittingers came to Norman from Moore where they had been teaching, and on March 10, 1950, celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary in their home at 225 West Duffy Street.

In a feature article in The Norman Transcript, published March 12, 1950, Dr. and Mrs. Gittinger recalled some of their life's experiences.

March was a significant month in their lives, Mrs. Gittinger said, for on March 10, 1900, their marriage took place in Maryville, Missouri. They had met in college in March, 1899, and had come to Norman in March of 1901.

"We have grown up with Norman and with the University," Mrs. Gittinger told the Transcript reporter. "All of us - the town and the University have had growing pains, but none so serious but what we have all weathered them and prospered."

They had seen the University grow from 100 students to 12,000 and the population of Norman grow from 2,225 in 1901 to the then 25,000. Their lives had not been dramatic, Dr. Gittinger commented, and the years had moved along with their usual pace and were uneventful.

By coincidence, Mrs. Gittinger told the reporter, both of them had decided to go to college. They were young school teachers -- he was teaching in Souther, Iowa, and she was living in Northern Missouri. Neither knew the other. It was an unusual decision for young folks to make in those days, but fate must have had a hand in their decision. They met at the college.

They each had decided to go to Simpson College in Indianola, Iowa. Franc Price, the young country school teacher, transferred from College Springs in Missouri to Simpson College for the spring term of 1899.

Roy Gittinger had attended Simpson College 1897-1898. Then he taught in Indianola the next fall and winter. He returned to Simpson for the Spring term of 1899. Both Franc Price and Roy Gittinger remained at Simpson for one year.

Then they decided to marry.

Franc Price, the daughter of John and Josephine Price of Barnard, Missouri, 12 miles north of Maryville, and Roy Gittinger, son of James F. and Nancy Applegate Gittinger of near Memrose, Iowa, were married in the Presbyterian Manse in Maryville on March 10, 1900.

On this 50th anniversary of their marriage, neither could remember the name of the minister, they related. But a cousin, Mrs. Gittinger remembered, and some friends accompanied them, and her dress was a grey one, she recalled. Their honeymoon trip was a drive over muddy country roads to the home of the bride's parents in Barnard, Iowa.

At the point, Dr. Gittinger said he preferred the muddy roads and rain of Missouri to the then prevailing high winds and dust storms of Oklahoma Territory when they first came to the state, but, Mrs. Gittinger said, she had preferred the winds and dust of Oklahoma to the rain and mud of Missouri.

They were to learn a great deal about Oklahoma prairie winds and dust after alighting from a Santa Fe train at Moore, in Cleveland County, where the newly married couple was to teach school. This was in June 1900.

"At that time, 50 years ago, Cleveland County was all wide open space and wild country. Coyotes howled in the prairies; the winds blew strong, and dust often obscured the view," Dr. Gittinger added.

The couple had been encouraged to come to Moore by his Uncle Henry and Aunt Mary Applegate, who took them in when they arrived. "When the winds became cyclonic," Mrs. Gittinger said, "We hunted their dugout."

It was a great occasion for Roy and Franc Gittinger when President Theodore Roosevelt came to Oklahoma City and they saw him in a Fourth of July parade with the Rough Riders in Oklahoma City. Dr. Gittinger recalled, with a smile, the route of the parade down Main Street and then Broadway Avenue, and remembered well the "wide smile and teeth of Teddy," as the parade progressed.

An epidemic of smallpox hit Moore, and the Gittingers decided, that since the Moore schools were closed, they would go back to school and came to Norman that March of 1901 and both entered the University, where Dr. Gittinger was to accrue many honors and teach the rest of his days.

Mrs. Gittinger did not attend very long, however, as she decided it was necessary for her to keep student boarders to see her husband through

school. "All these boarders, who were about the same age as they were, became their life-long friends," their daughter, Mrs. Mutnick wrote this editor.

Dr. Gittinger then began to teach history in the University in 1902.

They said that when they first came to Norman and for several years they took little part in the social life of the town, which at that time was centered on "Silk Stocking Row" as North Peters Avenue was then known.

As time passed they were active in the Presbyterian Church attending the services in the old church located at the corner of Crawford Avenue and Gray Street. A Rev. Mr. Rogers was minister, and Mrs. Gittinger sang in the choir. They saw succeeding ministers come and go; a new red brick church was built at West Main Street and Webster Avenue. (It was later demolished to become the home of the Southwestern Bell Telephone Co.)

They saw the plans for and the final construction of a new and finer modern church edifice built at White Street and University Boulevard in which the stained glass from windows in the old church were incorporated in the architectural design.

Dr. Gittinger served on the church board of trustees and the board of elders, and Mrs. Gittinger and Mrs. W. L. Eagleton (deceased), were the first women to become members of the Board of Trustees of the Norman Presbyterian Church.

During World War I, Dr. Gittinger then Dean Gittinger, was chairman of the Cleveland County Council of Defense. He also had served on the Norman City Council from 1906 and 1910 during which time he saw Main Street paved.

During World War II, Mrs. Gittinger served for 16 months with the Ration Board at the new Cleveland County Court House and served without pay.

The student body at the University had not changed greatly, Dr. Gittinger said, in the years that he was on the campus. The proportion of men and women had been about the same, however, the changes in the World situation had made a change in student enrolment numbers.

In his long career Dr. Gittinger had learned to know the student body well. During 25 years and more the records of every student admitted to the University passed through his hands, and he said, it was his privilege to know all of the Faculty members attached to the institution for the many years. In addition to these duties and teaching history, he compiled the catalogs and bulletins for the University of Oklahoma, he added.

Dr. Gittinger, who was born January 12, 1878, and who died October 13, 1957, left a long list of achievements which included authoring of two important historical books. One, "The Formation of the State of Oklahoma," was printed by the University of California at Berkeley in 1917, and deals with the period 1803-1906 in Oklahoma Territorial history. The other, "The University of Oklahoma, a History of Fifty Years, 1892-1942," was published by the University of Oklahoma Press in 1942.

His achievements include the B.A. degree at the University of Oklahoma,

1902; the M. A. degree from the University of Chicago, 1906, and his doctorate at the University of California in 1916. He was a life member of Oklahoma Education Association, a Phi Beta Kappa and a Mason.

At the University of Oklahoma he was principal of the preparatory school 1903-1908 as well as teaching in the Oklahoma University Department of History. He was professor of English history, 1905; Director of the Summer School, 1908, Dean of Undergraduate School 1915-1922. He was twice Registrar, 1910-1911, and 1919-1925; Acting Dean of the Graduate School, 1925-1926; Dean of Administration, 1926-1941; Dean of Admissions, 1941-1946, Regents Professor of History, 1946-1950, and became Professor Emeritus in 1950, and held the title until his death in October 1957.

In addition to other teaching he added a course in Biblical history in his later years, and headed the course. Also, while in California working toward his doctorate and writing his doctoral thesis, "The Formation of Oklahoma," he wrote the article on Oklahoma which appeared in several editions of Encyclopedia Britannica.

Mrs. Gittinger and children went to Berkeley, California, while Dr. Gittinger was on leave from Oklahoma University, and Mrs. Gittinger helped him read proof on his thesis, and typed it letter perfect with "not even an erasure, since Dr. Gittinger would accept nothing else," their daughter, Mrs. Mutnick wrote later.

Mrs. Gittinger was never able to achieve the college degree for which she had hoped and worked. Always there was one obstacle after another. There were the children to come along and she did achieve the only degree she had, that of "Ma", she said on her golden wedding anniversary. While Dr. Gittinger was working at the University of California, she enrolled too, hoping to do some work. But again fate intervened--their three children came down with measles, and "then I just gave up," Mrs. Gittinger added.

However, she did audit French Courses at Oklahoma University in later years, and tutored several students. She said with pride, she saw one student through the French requirements for his doctorate, and she was rewarded.

All of the Gittingers' children, J. Price, John and Dorothy, graduated from the University with bachelors and masters degrees.

The eldest, J. Price Gittinger married Sceatta Foster, also an Oklahoma University graduate. At the time of his death in 1969, he was director of relations with schools in California, with executive office at the University of California at Davis where he had served on the faculty from 1929. He and Sceatta had two children; J. Price, II, and Frances. J. Price, the son, holds a Ph.D. from the University of Iowa and is associated with the World Bank in Washington, D. C.

The second son, Dr. John Gittinger, is a partner in the Consulting firm Psychological Assessments Associates based in Washington, D. C. His wife is the former Mary Frances Ryle, daughter of John W. Ryle, Norman attorney, and Mrs. Ryle.

Their son, John, Jr., is a graduate of the Harvard Medical School,

Washington, and their daughter, Jane, and her husband, Bruce Travis, have two boys, the only Gittinger great-grandchildren.

The daughter, Dorothy, and her husband, Harold E. Mutnick, a graduate of Columbia School of Law, live in Lafayette, California, where he is an attorney. Her mother, Franc Price Gittinger, lives nearby.

*Franc is the preferred spelling of Mrs. Gittinger's name.