

*George W. Gardner photo*

Sam B. Shirky—born October 9, 1896, Norborne, Missouri. Father—Gideon Bowman Shirky; Mother—Eugenia Mansur Shirky.

Married—June 6, 1918 to Frances Marguerite Forbes, daughter of James H. Forbes and Penelope Hill Forbes.

One Daughter—Frances Marguerite Shirky (Mrs. Norman D. Asel).

Graduated from the Westport High School, Kansas City, 1914. Bachelor of Science in Agriculture, University of Missouri College of Agriculture in 1918.

Master of Arts degree, University of Missouri in 1919.

Appointed assistant in Agricultural Chemistry in June 1918.

Instructor in Agricultural Chemistry 1919-1920.

Assistant to the Dean and Director, College of Agriculture; Superintendent of Short Courses; Assistant Professor; September 1920.

Associate Professor, 1929; Professor, 1941; Associate Dean of the College of Agriculture, 1945; Associate Director of the Agricultural Experiment Station, 1948.

Membership and chairmanship of many committees of the faculty of the College of Agriculture and of the University of Missouri.

Membership in Alpha Zeta, Gamma Sigma Delta, Kappa Sigma. Columbia Kiwanis Club, Methodist Church.

Above are "the dry statistics," as Gordon Nance, the economist would say, "and now for the personality that makes the facts and figures, dates and places of significance, per se, as the lawyers would say." Now to the Shirky as one student knew him, and the handling of this piece brings into focus an appropriate story in kind.

Liberty Hyde Bailey, the great Cornell horticulturist, once made a speech which had to have the approval of his institution's "brass" before it could be given, and released for publication. Bailey pompously read a close-cropped, hard-edited talk of some twenty minutes, and then said, "Gentlemen, those are the facts as approved by Cornell, and of which you have printed copies for publication; and now gentlemen, I will give you my main speech."

The great scientist went on then to travel back through memory's lanes, recounting his rich memorable experiences of generations long since passed, which taken together formed the rich textured tapestry of a long, successful life. Reporters gathered there at Ithaca forgot to use the "prepared" speech, but their rough notes and memory were able to conjure up for their readers something infinitely more valuable from the chunks of wisdom and philosophy that came to them that day unrehearsed.

So it is now, I go back through memory's lane to a day in the lazy fall of 1922, forty years ago. A door slammed shut at the old YMCA building at the campus' north entranceway, and a senior and a fresh-

## I REMEMBER SAM

By Clyde H. Duncan  
Associate Agricultural Editor

man walked into the street. The senior was Barnum Wade, the freshman the author of this piece.

"Where you goin' Freshman?"

"Over to the White Campus, to Chem under Dr. Schlundt."

"A good place to be going, wish I was going there, too."

"Where you goin', Barnum?"

"To see Sam."

"Sam, whose Sam?"

"Sam Shirky, you know Sam, the dean's assistant."

"Huh"

"You'll say, 'Huh', one of these days when you have to face him."

"Maybe I'll never have to face him."

"All men, sooner or later, Freshman, have to face him. It as been so decreed by the gods. Just remember this, Freshman, you may get through all the chemistry they have laid up for you, all the science in store for you, but just remember this, after you've done all that you'll have yet one final hurdle. You'll have Sam."

My hurdle wasn't long in coming. A low grade in Soils under Dr. Albrecht brought a pink card to my door, and with it the friendly invitation to visit the office of the Assistant Dean. With Barnum Wade's admonition yet fresh in mind I walked hat in hand to the office of the man whom by then I had regarded with hardly less awe than I would the Angel Gabriel. He didn't bite. He didn't even snap. I had seen high school teachers in Arkansas a lot tougher. He even seemed very pleasant. He motioned me to sit down, and he had a look at my card.

He came to the point pretty quickly, "See Dr. Albrecht." He turned back to a mountain of work, and little did he know that his decision had a great influence upon me. I think that short meeting with Sam Shirky that day 40 years ago sealed something in his mind regarding Dr. Albrecht and myself because ever afterward when I had to go to the Dean's office on some trivial matter, such as flunking one or more subjects, the admonition was always the same, "See Dr. Albrecht."

And so I had Dr. Albrecht as an advisor all through my University days, and even though I might be making a low grade in Advertising, or Copy Reading, or Law of The Press, since I was enrolled in Agricultural Journalism, and all authority pertaining to me rested and was vested on the white campus, Sam Shirky came much into my life and he brought Dr. Albrecht with him. His admonition, though, never changed, "See Dr. Albrecht." And so Dr. Albrecht advised me on everything under the sun, in soils and out of soils, it made no difference what. It was a rich experience; I got more of Dr. Albrecht's time than perhaps a half dozen students, thanks to Sam Shirky, and low grades.

I tell all this to make a point. Sam Shirky has always had the happy faculty of reaching a decision, and the decision has always seemed to be right. In my case I know he played no hunch particularly, because the man is too logical, too factual to make a decision like those who "play the horses." But he

sensed that the man who could help me most was Dr. Albrecht, and how right time was to prove him to be.

To all of us he has often seemed to be unbending and unyielding when pressed for an affirmative decision on some project claiming our interest. Once the decision has been made try not to change it. The Rock of Gibraltar has been found to be made of rubber cement compared to the Shirky will. There is compensation in that, too. If you happen to have qualms about your degree, think perhaps you didn't earn it, don't worry. As an old alumnus friend once said, "If Sam said you should graduate, ten angels saying you shouldn't would make no difference. You'd graduate." A slight exaggeration, perhaps, but not much when taken figuratively.

If I've pictured him as being all granite with an overlay of carborundum mixed with steel, the implication is false indeed. Like all strong men, really strong men, there's a soft side. And as so often is the case the softness lingers longer in the memory than the other side.

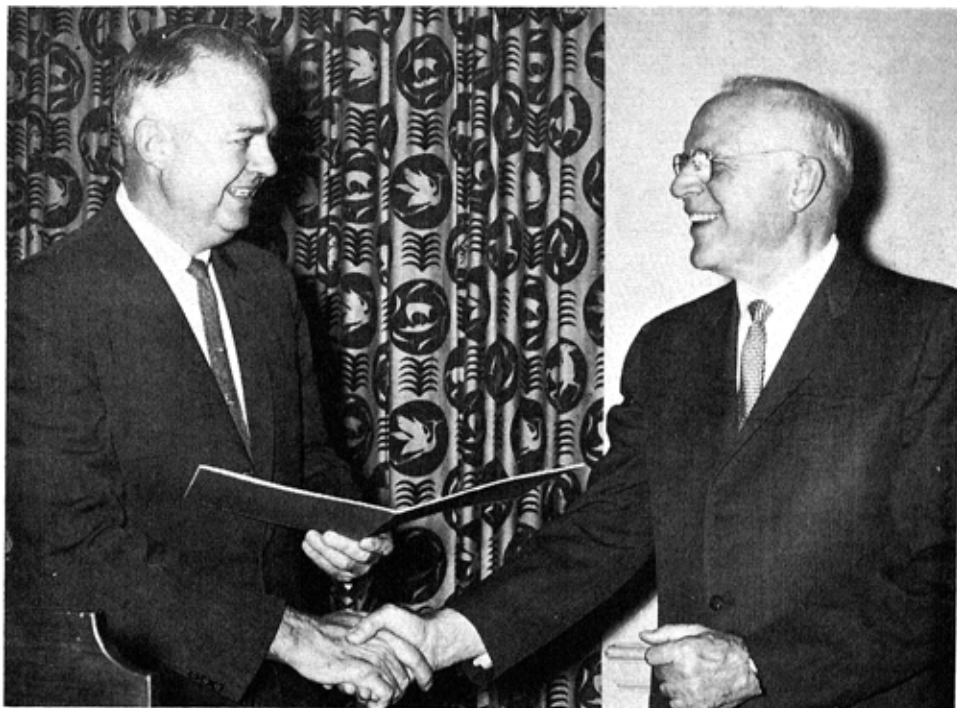
Sam isn't a man to compromise with a problem, and there have been many students, hard-pressed for ways and means to earn a livelihood and stay in school, who can trace solutions to personal problems, financial and otherwise, to him. For any problem-solving for a student he never expected any special credit. He considered it in the line of duty, what the people who pay taxes in this state expected of him, and applause for him would have been repulsive.

It's hard to vignette a life that spans nearly a half century in education's vineyard. Those of us who have lived the less crowded hour are shamed into a sense of insignificance by the man's rich accomplishments. National President of Gamma Sigma Delta; twenty years as Missouri's athletic representative in the conference of those years; Chairman of the Missouri Athletic Committee for two decades, and a member for 21 years; Chairman of the University's discipline committee; Chairman of the Student Affairs Committee, charter member of the Columbia Kiwanis Club, and many, many more.

As a student he was a forward on the basketball teams of '16-'17 and the championship one of 1918, playing under three coaches: Gene Van Gent, John Miller and Walter E. Meanwell. "I was five feet-ten inches high, weighed a hundred and fifty pounds, and was the slowest man in the country," Sam says now. "Playing under present-day standards they'd run a guy like me out of the field house."

Sam Shirky has had much to do with everything agricultural at the University including the revision of curriculum, building and planning of old Mumford Hall, the Ag. Lab., and in more recent days the new College of Agriculture building in which he envisioned "getting as much agriculture under one roof as possible."

On September 1, the subject of this piece became an Associate Dean Emeritus, and assumed a new job, that of Director of the University's technical education services, which includes Photo Service embracing the vast program of off-set printing, which he has



*At ceremony honoring retiring University personnel, Dean Elmer R. Kiehl of the College of Agriculture presents Associate Dean Sam B. Shirky certificate of appreciation for his long service.*

fathered from the depression days, and in which he has had great interest. He has been a moving spirit in the University's public relations program, and has bent his effort toward improving the quality of the printed word from copy to completed booklet. He brings to his new job an artistic side, and one might say he possesses an "ear for good writing." For that he gives Sophia Rosenberger, his English teacher in Kansas City's Westport High School, full credit. "No one ever wrote a theme for Sophia Rosenberger," Sam says. "They re-wrote it." It has been the re-writing about writing that has impressed Sam. "I understand the science of writing but not the art."

Since 1948, when his responsibilities of looking after experiment station detail were greatly increased, Sam has regretted he has not had a chance to see and work with students as much as he once did. But now, looking back, it is the student who stands more in the foreground than the station, or anything else. "The basic honesty and sincerity of students stands out most in my mind." The quote belongs to Sam.

He worked under five deans: Mumford, Miller, Trowbridge, Longwell and Kiehl. He enjoyed his relationship under all of them, and to all of them he gives credit for rich legacies that they as personalities imparted to him.

Perhaps it was due to this long serving under sev-

eral deans that fully accounts for the experiences which came to this writer, and which pertains to the subject of this piece.

There were those years when I tramped the earth as a reporter, a writer, editor. Whether it was in Alabama, Mississippi, Kansas, Arkansas, Illinois, Iowa, Montana, Idaho, Washington, California, Alaska or the Yukon, there'd be University of Missouri alumni I'd see, and many who hadn't been back to the haunts of their student days for many years.

When we'd get around to reminiscing the words would begin or end always in this wise: "When did you last see Sam . . ." and then the words would trail off, and you knew as you fished for an answer the former student had gone back to yesterdays, back to some pleasant hour, some moment when some problem he'd carried had ended quicker than it had begun under the cool, calm reasoning of Sam.

Had Sam Shirky have been a judge he would have been a good one, because he would have been just. Had he have been a businessman he would have made a fortune, because he knows how to handle money and it doesn't awe him. Had he have been anything other than what he was, and is, he wouldn't have been Sam. He wouldn't have been the Shirky I've known now nigh on to forty years. He wouldn't have been Sam.