



In how many ways may an alumnus serve his alma mater? Bob Newman, greatly interested in University affairs since his graduation, has always been in the forefront of any campaign in its behalf. In his first job at Peoria, Ill., he saw the need for an active M.U. alumni club, and through his efforts one was formed. Whenever the Alumni Office is called upon by a University division or department to recommend active, energetic alumni in his area, it invariably includes Bob Newman. That is how football recruitment was added to his other services. In this activity, for which he professes no special talents, he has met with the same success that has attended his other University efforts. In at least one instance he came upon a real "find" for Missouri football. We thought his experiences leading up to this discovery would make an interesting story, and at our insistence, Bob, who now lives in Chicago, agreed to jot down the facts. He chose to put them in letter form, thinking this would be rewritten into an objective article. The letter sounded interesting enough as he wrote it and is reprinted on these pages.

Adventures

In the spring of 1958, I received a telephone call at my Peoria, Ill., home from Al Onofrio, who introduced himself as one of the new football coaches at the University of Missouri. He said that during the off-season he often traveled into Illinois for the purpose of contacting good high school football prospects and asked if I would be interested in helping him talk to boys in the Peoria area. My name, he indicated, was suggested by the Alumni Office because of my recent activities in helping to form a Peoria alumni club.

Somewhat flabbergasted, I replied that while I did graduate from the University, the closest I ever came to a football at M.U. was on the 35-yard line, in the 35th row, at Memorial Stadium. Besides, I remarked, it had been my impression that no recruiting was done outside the State of Missouri.

Al assured me that it was not necessary to have been a former All Conference halfback in order to recruit. Moreover, he pointed out that the school was recruiting outside the state with the provision that those boys contacted were not only proficient on the gridiron, but good students and fine citizens as well.

I skeptically accepted "the call" to the Black and Gold, and volunteered for any assignment short of "suing up." In the ensuing months my education broadened considerably. I found myself using such expressions as, "He's great on the roll-out, but he can't pass out of the pocket," or such language as, "He's a real horse up front . . . loves that contact." I also learned what "pursuit," "courage," and "desire" meant in football jargonese.

Suffice to say, my education did not stop with football. I learned that the University of Missouri recruits by the rules as well as it plays by the rules. I learned that the kind of boys we would be contacting were primarily candidates for a Number 1 scholarship—which is the easy way of saying he would receive room, board, books, tuition, and \$15 per month if he could qualify—which is another way of saying he is a top prospect.

I learned the NCAA recruiting regulations and soon discovered that first-class boys would come to Missouri when you operated by those rules (and worked hard to get them).

In the beginning the job did not appear too easy. Illinois is Big Ten country and in these parts every

of a TIGER HUNTER

son of the gridiron sod has visions of breaking Red Grange's scoring record while guiding his team to a Rose Bowl bid. But thanks to patient efforts by such hard-working coaches as Al Onofrio, Clay Cooper, and Tom Fletcher, Ole Mizou began to have a magnetic appeal for good student-athletes from Illinois.

My particular role, like the role of active alumni in other areas, was to follow up on contacts made by the coaches or to alert the staff to a "hot" prospect in the vicinity. Following up meant stopping by a boy's house occasionally to have a chat with the whole family, or perhaps a phone call to see how school was coming along, or perhaps attend a high school graduation (as I did on one occasion).

I decided early in this game to leave the football talk to the coaches and that I would concentrate on the University. I always tried to sell the prospect on M.U. as a fine educational institution from which a degree would mean a great deal toward a professional career. And I never missed a chance to stress that in the Big Ten, football was a "career;" while at Missouri it was placed in its proper perspective in relation to the total educational program. This approach always seemed to impress the better class of student-athlete, and particularly his parents.

Being in the public relations business, I know the importance of having a *good* product, company, or cause. Selling kids on the University of Missouri was easy, I found, because we had an excellent "product" to sell. For instance, we could talk about the University's fine schools such as journalism, engineering, education, medicine, and others. We could talk about the fine campus atmosphere (and Stephens and Christian women) and point out that the University was small enough to get acquainted but large enough to have all the advantages of a major institution. We could talk about one of the nation's top football coaches, Dan Devine, who possessed the exceptional ability to get close to kids . . . to understand their problems . . . to teach . . . to lead . . . and to inspire.

There have been some pleasant surprises, and a few disappointments, during my nearly four years of "hunting Tigers," but I have enjoyed every minute of it. During that time, I have contacted approxi-

mately 45 boys and some 12 high school coaches, attended a dozen or two high school football games and viewed as many football movies, and collected several baskets of newspaper clippings. And I have "worked" in Peoria, Decatur, and now am keeping a sharp eye in the Chicago area.

The most unusual story, and by far the most gratifying experience, concerns a young prospect that nobody seemed to want, including Missouri. In July of 1958, while still living in Peoria, I received a phone call from a high school coach with a "hot tip." He said that there was an interesting football prospect living in a small town just outside Peoria who had made "Little All State" and who was looking around for a school to attend.

The call came late on a Friday afternoon at work and I was scheduled to begin a two weeks vacation in less than thirty minutes. The car was packed and aimed at Lee's Summit, Mo., my wife's home town, and the family was anxiously waiting at home. Risking domestic wrath, I decided to talk to this boy before leaving.

The boy was not at home, but I did find his father in a Peoria hospital recuperating from a slight accident with a garden tractor. As it turned out, the boy's father was also his high school coach, which was a convenient source of information to say the least.

Dad talked about how his son had completed as quarterback 217 passes in high school with only 5 interceptions. This record was compiled in spite of his being played only 50% of the time. He sounded great.

Dad talked about how clever he was, how he mixed his plays well, and how he would make some college a great quarterback. Not only that, but he was an excellent student. He sounded better every minute.

Then I came to the moment of truth. He was only 5' 8" tall and most schools, Dad said, like Northwestern and West Point, considered him too small to pass out "of the pocket." His dad convinced me that he could play great college football if someone would give him the chance.

Later, I called a few coaches whose teams had played against our young man in question. The answer was the same . . . *good* college material. I checked some prominent football officials who had

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worked games in which the boy had played. Again the same answer. I checked sports reporters on the local newspaper. Again the same answer.

The hour was growing late and the family was becoming more impatient to start vacation. I put a quick call to Coach Clay Cooper in Columbia and excitedly told him of my "great discovery." I worked him up to a fever pitch and then sprung this 5' 8" business on him. It didn't go over too well, but he promised to check with Dan Devine and call when we got to Lee's Summit.

A few days later, Clay called to say that he had checked with a coaching friend at Northwestern who remembered the boy but passed him up because of his size. Clay said that all but a few M.U. scholarships had been assigned, meaning they would have to turn this "discovery" down.

Following vacation, I went back to see the boy and his father with the bad news. The father convinced me that the decision should be appealed. It was, but was turned down a second time. Not giving up, the father kept talking and the more he talked the more I was determined to get some kind of a job for this boy even if it meant carrying a water bucket. By this time, we were well into the month of August.

In a last ditch effort, I called Columbia and said something to this effect, "Clay . . . Bob again . . . I'm going to give it to you straight out . . . either we give this boy some kind of scholarship, or our public relations will be shot in Peoria!" He said he would check with Dan again and call back.

An hour later the phone rang. "Bob . . . Clay again . . . the best we can do is a Number 3 scholarship. If he is as good as you say, we will raise him after his freshman year."

The boy took the scholarship without ever visiting the campus or meeting a single coach. His first contact with M.U. came on September 1, 1958, when I drove him down to Columbia to report for freshman practice.

He didn't play much as a freshman, in fact by Thanksgiving time of that first year he confessed to me that he was leaving M.U. for a smaller school. Jean Madden and I spent a good two hours in his dormitory room trying to convince him that leaving would be the greatest mistake of his life. He stayed.

Following spring practice, in which he had shown up well, his scholarship was raised. During his sophomore year he was sidelined for a few games with a sprained ankle, but he did manage to draw some notice in the Kansas State game with his passing.

During his junior year, the 1960 season, he was Missouri's number one quarterback and guided the Tigers to national prominence. This is his senior year, and another successful football season is unfolding.

Of course, the boy, or the "little general," is Ron Taylor. Ron has not only developed into a fine college athlete, he is, and has been, one of the finest young gentlemen it has been my privilege to know. I consider myself extremely fortunate to have had a small part in his career.

This story is told merely to illustrate what a fantastic bit of luck was involved in getting Ron. I am no great judge of football talent, and based on the reports given to the coaching staff they had every right to be cautious about accepting him. There were no films available and no scouting reports. All we had to go on were a few clippings in a scrapbook and the steadfast conviction of a proud father named George Taylor.

You may wonder why I participate in this activity. I owe the University a great deal for my education. True, as a tax-supported institution, the University was available to me as a resident. However, it is suspected that the amount of taxes, and fees, paid by me did not completely cover the cost of M.U. to educate me. I am not able to repay the debt with any large donations, but I am able to help send fine students and athletes to M.U. who will hopefully be a credit to its reputation.

Bob Newman, writer of the foregoing, is with the Brunswick Corporation in Chicago on the corporate public relations staff as Secretary, The Brunswick Foundation, Inc. He has been with the corporation since July, 1960. He joined Caterpillar Tractor Co. in Peoria (Feb. '56) after receiving two degrees from the University, A.B. (Jan. '55) and B.J. (Jan. '56). After two years as Community Relations Representative, he was transferred to Caterpillar's Decatur plant as Community Relations Supervisor. Newman is a native of Kansas City, where he attended Paseo High School. His wife, the former Sallie Taylor, also attended the University. They have three daughters.