

The Stewart Story—

O. M. Stewart Scholarships and Fellowships totaling more than \$11,000 have been awarded to 23 students now majoring or planning to major or minor in physics at the University during the coming year. Five are fellowships awarded to graduate students, seven are renewals of scholarships for undergraduate students, and eleven are awards to outstanding high school seniors who have applied for the Stewart Scholarships. Funds for the O. M. Stewart Awards are provided through the will of the late Professor Stewart, who taught physics at the University from 1901 to 1944. Dr. Stewart's will also left a fund to finance periodical lectures at the University by outstanding scientists.

The foregoing introduction to a news release merely summarizes in briefest fashion the continuing benefits that stem from the wishes and foresight of Dr. Oscar M. Stewart as reflected in his will, which was drawn up a few months before his death in 1944. News announcements similar to the one above have been appearing each spring for nearly two decades. The Stewart fund, since its inception, has provided scholarship aid for about 125 students. It has brought to the University campus 106 scientists in a distinguished lecture series; a number of these speakers were Nobel Prize winners before they appeared here, and others received the award afterward. The fund has averaged nearly \$10,000 annually. Dr. Stewart's textbook, *Physics, A Textbook for Colleges*, first published in 1924, has added to the fund through royalties; for a time the book was a "best seller" in its field and is now in its sixth edition.

Those who knew Professor Stewart at various stages of his 43-year tenure recall him as an excellent teacher with a deep personal interest in students. Whenever students were in trouble, he could be found at their side, and he often was generous financially to those he saw in need—provided they had not sought his help and would not reveal his benevolence. He commanded respect among his associates. His Scot ancestry endowed him with a natural bent in the nurturing of funds; his judgment in investments enabled him to build a rather impressive estate in times when professors' salaries were indeed modest. He was devoted to the University, particularly its Department of Physics, and as he neared retirement it was not surprising that he took steps to ensure that the institution would share in his estate for years to come.

Tom K. Smith, noted St. Louis banker, was influential in the decision that Dr. Stewart reached in order to achieve that purpose, although Mr. Smith probably would disclaim any credit. The future banking leader came to the University as a freshman in 1900, and during his years as a student came to know Dr.

Stewart, also a new arrival on the campus, as a sort of adviser to students. He was impressed by the professor's easy accessibility from the student viewpoint, and compared him with "Daddy" Defoe in this respect.

Years later, when Mr. Smith was president of the Boatmen's National Bank of St. Louis, Professor Stewart came to see him. "He became interested in investments," Mr. Smith said. "I took him through the shop (Smith's down to earth name for the elegant banking house). I told him about all the departments we had. We got into this subject about trusts, and he concluded what he wanted to have in his will."

The professor, in discussing investments, expressed a strong belief in diversification; he wanted his estate properly invested, and he was turning to professional management to carry out his objectives. His will, after providing several personal bequests, left the residue of his estate to the Boatmen's National Bank in trust. It directed his trustee to keep the property well invested, "keeping primarily in mind the security of the principal rather than a high rate of interest." It stipulated that the net income shall be paid to the University of Missouri Board of Curators for educational or scientific purposes connected with the Department of Physics. (Earlier he had made small gifts to the University for use by the department.)

Only earnings of the fund have been used. The fund has appreciated two and one-half times; the income has appreciated three times. Trust officers at Boatmen's make no effort to conceal their obvious pride in the success of the fund, but none will take individual credit. "There are many people working on this, you know," one officer said.

Another provision of the Stewart will is that a budget request is to be presented each year by the University's President and a committee appointed by him. A more or less typical budget includes requests of \$1,500 for lectures, \$5,000 for scholarships, and \$7,200 for fellowships.

The trust officers like to recall that in the 40s the publisher of Stewart's textbook offered a flat \$16,000 for the outright purchase of the book. It was a tempting offer, but it was met by "a right guess." It was turned down. Since then, royalties have totaled almost five times the amount of the offer.

A man who has had a closer association with that textbook than any other person save the author is Dr. Newell S. Gingrich, professor of physics at the University. As a colleague of Dr. Stewart on the staff for several years, he was in position to observe him at close range; Dr. Gingrich came to the Missouri

Why It Lives On

faculty in 1936, and Dr. Stewart retired to emeritus status in 1940. After four editions of the Stewart textbook had been published, it was Dr. Gingrich who was chosen to revise the fifth edition. He also revised the sixth edition. In doing so, Dr. Gingrich excised old matter and injected new, but sought to keep the Stewart style and flavor.

"We tried to retain Stewart but not be archaic," Dr. Gingrich said. "The publishers felt that if we changed the book too much we might lose some of the old customers and not get enough new ones. It is still one of the more old fashioned books, in that many of the newer textbooks deal largely with the abstract concept in physics."

While the textbook is less widely used now, some high schools with advanced studies in physics are beginning to adopt it and this, with repeat orders from long-time clients, seems to ensure a steady sale of the book for some time to come although, as the trust officers phrased it, "the royalties are a depleting asset." The book was the best selling among all physics textbooks for two or three years in the late 20s, and certainly its 38 years of continuous use is an enviable record in longevity.

Dr. Gingrich recalls the philosophical attitude of Dr. Stewart on the popularity of his book. To the author it seemed the textbook met a need, that it came along at the right time. Dr. Gingrich retains many impressions of Professor Stewart:

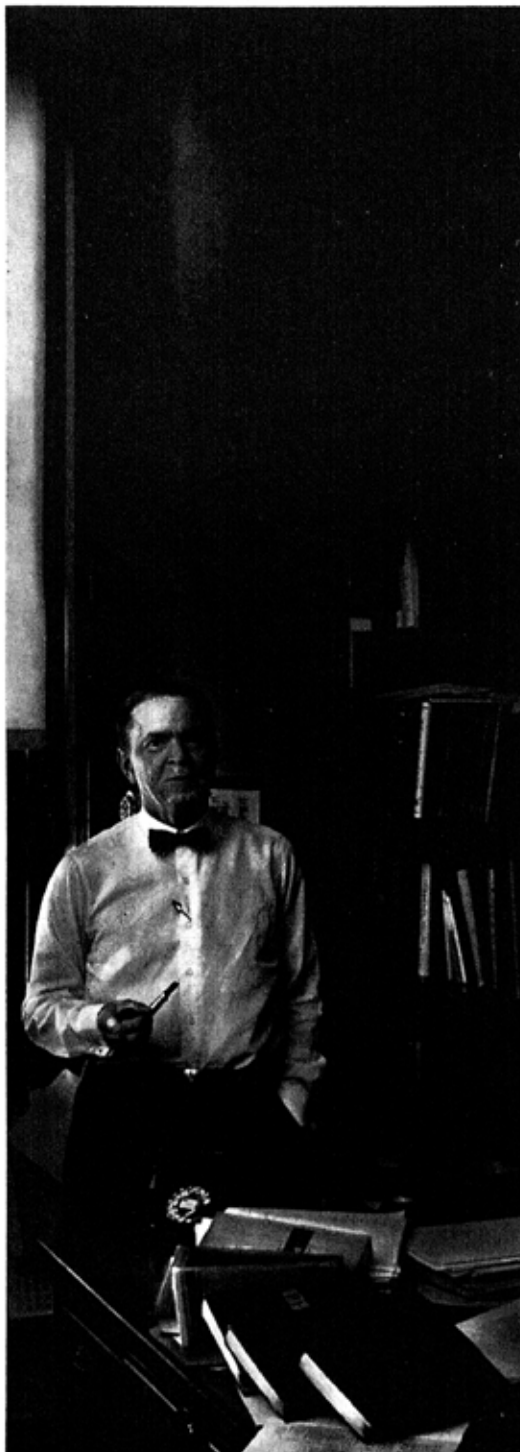
"He was quite a man. Few on the staff then or maybe now were his equal for vigor or mental alertness. He was a first class salesman. He sold physics, and he sold himself. He was a good administrator and a good arbitrator. You knew when he spoke that he spoke with authority. He did command respect.

"Stewart had a great reputation as a teacher. Everyone said he was one of the best. He was an expert showman; he had something to say, and he put on a real show. There was something in him that was dramatic and had appeal. Many students who have written through the years have asked about Dr. Stewart and about Dr. Herbert Reese. Stewart was in charge of the disciplinary committee for years. Students with personal problems came to him for solutions. When he saw a deserving student having a hard time, he might slip him a hundred dollars or more to help out, with the suggestion that nothing be said of it. If he were asked for such help, he would probably refuse it."

Dr. Stewart, who earned his bachelor's degree at DePauw, went to Cornell for his Ph.D. He was very active and very vigorous at Cornell, and according to



The late O. M. Stewart



Dr. Newell S. Gingrich

Stewart Story continued

all reports he was a leader and a man of great pride; colleagues spoke of him as "a wonderful man."

"When I went to Cornell," Dr. Gingrich said, "I saw a plaque with the names of eight or ten charter members of the American Physical Society. I believe Dr. Stewart's name was third or fourth on the list. This is the most important society of physics in the country. And here at Missouri he was one of the organizers, and perhaps the first president, of Sigma Xi."

When Dr. Stewart came to the University, he encountered an extremely heavy teaching load. During the first semester, he was teaching 26 hours a week. The research he had pursued at Cornell bogged down here, although he did write two major articles.

A personal tragedy was a shattering blow to Dr. Stewart and his wife. Their only son, Lawrence W. Stewart, at 18 a volunteer in World War I, became an influenza epidemic victim soon after entering service. However, it was in the early years of his grief over this loss that Dr. Stewart produced his popular textbook.

Other former contemporaries of Dr. Stewart on the campus have recollections of him as a great teacher. Dr. Frederick A. Middlebush, President Emeritus of the University, recalls him as "one of the outstanding teachers of science in his day."

"He was a man of outstanding devotion to the University, and was especially interested in students," Dr. Middlebush said. "He and I used to talk a great deal about the University. Much of my indoctrination in the traditions and background and ideals of the University came in substantial part from my association with Stewart." He said he was a professor wise enough to be helpful not only in the classroom and laboratory, but outside as well, and through wise investments he was able to set up a program to aid students, who were always a main concern with him.

Dr. Frank F. Stephens, Dean Emeritus, College of Arts and Science, remembers Professor Stewart as "a man of good judgment, faithful and with a reputation as a good teacher." Writing of Stewart in his recent *History of the University of Missouri*, Dr. Stephens says: "He established a noteworthy laboratory in electrical measurements, and his assistant, Herbert M. Reese, became a specialist in the subject of optics. These two men were largely responsible for the planning of a modern classroom and laboratory building erected a few years later." Cornerstone of the building, now known as Stewart Hall, was laid in 1912.

The productive career of Oscar M. Stewart is marked by many monuments. Still fresh are the memories of his friendship for students, of his teaching ability, and of his devotion to the University. The physics building which he helped design is named in his honor. The book he wrote in 1924 continues in service. Through his foresight and planning, scholarship aid in the field of physics is provided in perpetuity.