

# The man behind the window

By Jean Madden

**T**HOUGH the usual life of an athletic ticket manager at many major institutions is a short unhappy one. Missouri's Virgil Spurling has been doing business at the same old stand for forty years. The best indication of his attitude toward a demanding job is his statement, "I believe we probably have fewer disgruntled ticket holders than any major school in the United States and also less trouble with student seating than other schools because, in both cases, we give them more."

This pleasant appraisal of his work came as a surprise. We frankly expected this report to have two main themes running through it—complaints of fans, and the complexity of the system of ordering and reordering tickets. We missed on both counts.

Part of the job of selling tickets is out of Spurling's hands—the creation of demand for tickets. This is done by having winning seasons, adroitly publicizing the team, and providing balmy autumn days. Virgil can't do anything about winning games or controlling the weather, but he does have some advice to offer to weepy coaches who belittle the abilities and stress the injuries of their athletes: "You don't sell circus tickets with sick elephants."

The efficiency with which he handles his ticket duties and his many other responsibilities is best attested by a comment made by an alumni member of the University Athletic Committee regarding the \$800,000-plus budget which Virgil had submitted for Intercollegiate Athletics for the coming year: "Virgil's like a bank statement; you often hope he's wrong, but he never is."

The complaints he receives are really few in number, but the white-haired Spurling is armed with detailed records on which to base his reply; for years back he can tell you when your order came in and how many applications were ahead of it for any game at the time. When it comes to the allocation of tickets, he relies on no one else but does it personally. Here, then, is a real working ticket manager—or, if you prefer his title as listed in the faculty directory, he is the University's Executive Secretary of the Committee on Intercollegiate Athletics.

THE HEART OF THE TICKET SYSTEM is the mailing list maintained on IBM cards. The apparently simple yet effective methods of this ticket order system were recently presented at a meeting of university IBM managers. The system was favorably received and will probably be widely copied. All season ticket holders are on this list, as well as any individual who has ordered tickets during the past five years. From this list all season ticket holders are solicited about the middle of April with a reorder blank. If they are not heard from, they are resolicited. On June 1 all who have reordered are billed. Sometime during the first week in June all individual ticket purchasers are sent IBM order forms for season tickets, individual game tickets and away-games. Thus all those on the mailing list have automatic priority. (Incidentally, a distinct advantage accrues to those who order tickets for away-games through the M. U. ticket office. First, they sit with other Missouri rooters and, secondly, they gen-



*Virgil Spurling, in charge of athletic tickets at M. U., stands where most fans would like to sit—on the 50-yard line. Actually, no seats are so situated, because of the aisles.*

erally have better seats than individuals can buy at their own schools.)

After *all* season tickets have been assigned, individual orders are considered. Virgil concedes that it is sometimes hard for the individual ticket buyer to understand this, but it must be obvious that primary priority must be given to that ticket holder who will occupy his seat for five games, rather than anyone who will be here for only one game. Admittedly it is a problem to accommodate the out of state alumnus who can be here for only one game and who would like to sit inside the fifteen yard line. There is, for instance, one prominent alumnus who wants 100 *good* seats for the 1963 Oklahoma game for a group of his classmates. However, even if he orders them this far in advance, he will have to be first in line behind the season ticket holders for that season, and at best that can't be any better than the ten or fifteen yard line. As Spurling points out, to set aside 100 *good* seats for a single would penalize season ticket buyers, pushing them farther away from the seating position their long patronage had earned them.

The simple facts are these: With approximately 10,000 public season tickets sold on the west side (and that many more for highly interested faculty and student season ticket holders on the east side), the remaining 11 to 12 thousand permanent seats just can't be in the middle of the field. Memorial Stadium has 31,716 permanent seats.

If this sounds bad, consider the situation at Ohio State where it may soon be that none of the 85,000 seats will be available except for students and a few fans of the visiting institution. At Oklahoma this year season ticket holders are advised that any additional tickets will be in the end zone.

ALONG WITH THESE general ticket problems there are some particular advantages to the system as it has been developed here. First of all, as alumni you'll be happy to know that alumni are given priority in all ticket orders and that there's a good chance that in the near future all active members may be put on the priority mailing, as they were so successfully for the recent Orange Bowl game. Another feature of this priority system is that you can still order season tickets and be assured of good seats or you can order individual game tickets when you get your order card and be assured that no one else has any time advantage on you. On season tickets there are the additional advantages of improving your position as others give up their tickets. At some schools these ticket positions are actually *willed* to other people. Virgil says approximately 90% of our season ticket holders do not avail themselves of chances to move locations, so even the new purchaser is virtually assured of an early chance to move to better seats. Still another advantage for season buyers is the reduced rate in effect for them. Missouri is "the only school



in the country" which offers a bargain price of five season tickets for the price of four regular ones.

The relatively simple order system must also be listed on the positive side of the ledger, particularly when compared to the complex systems in vogue at some other schools. As a college graduate, I have serious reservations about ever being able to fill out the Notre Dame or Oklahoma order blanks I have seen. Of course, that may be a conscious device to discourage any but the most serious purchasers.

Finally, the very structure of the stadium is itself an advantage. I, for one, was not aware that in regard to seats within the twenty-yard lines our abbreviated double deck ranks us with the largest half dozen stadia in the nation. Only the Los Angeles Coliseum, the Michigan Stadium at Ann Arbor and two or three others have more than the 78 rows our Memorial Stadium boasts at mid-field. As Virgil expressed it, we have 306 "fifty-yard" line seats and no one has more than 340. Another physical advantage is the fact that the ground level entrance to our stands is at row 38, so that no one has to go up more than 40 rows or down more than 38.

HERE ARE THE STEPS to be taken to insure the best possible seats. Number one, order a season ticket right now. There are only about 11,000 seats left in the permanent stands and the way the Tigers have been

going there's no telling how long they'll last. Number two, if you can't justify a season ticket, be sure to get your name on the ticket office mailing list by ordering your tickets directly. When you're on the mailing list, you get automatic solicitation and automatic priority. Number three, return your order cards immediately. Within the limits of priority, the office operates strictly on a first come, first served basis. Number four, don't slow your order down by ordering through some individual or through the alumni office. Anyone else you send it to just has to turn it over to Mr. Spurling and his staff; and since it's run strictly on the calendar basis, you simply hurt your chances for better seats by slowing down your orders. Besides, we'd rather be able to blame Virgil if you don't like your seats.

## 100 meet at Warrensburg

About 100 alumni attended the regional dinner meeting at Warrensburg on May 11 and heard President Elmer Ellis discuss the University's expanded programs of instruction and services. Mayor H. H. Russell presented Dr. Ellis a key to the city of Warrensburg and notified him that he had been made an honorary citizen.

Al Onofrio, top assistant to Coach Dan Devine, discussed prospects of this year's football team and said the Tigers are "as fine a bunch of young boys" as he has worked with, and that "they play hard."

Bus Entsminger briefly reviewed alumni activities. He filled in for Jean Madden, who had to be in Texas.

Banquet arrangements were handled by Mr. and Mrs. Charles Fitzgerald, who were assisted by a committee of alumni from Johnson County.

## McKinney revises textbook

A new and completely revised edition of the popular textbook, "Psychology of Personal Adjustment," by Dr. Fred McKinney, professor of psychology at the University, has been published by John Wiley & Sons of New York. This is the second revision of the book, which was first published in 1941 and has been widely adopted in colleges and universities throughout the country. The second edition, improved and revised, was published in 1949.

Dr. McKinney describes the new edition as almost an entirely new book. He says the material has been brought up to date and modified, continuing to feature a student-centered approach which deals not only with basic theoretical concepts, but also with their application to specific student problems.

"We have changed the approach to provide more help for students who are learning to face their own problems," Dr. McKinney said, "with emphasis placed on understanding one's own development, self-identity, and self-actualization, and with particular stress on adjustment as a creative process."

The publishers have also issued an Instructor's Manual designed to accompany the text. Including a bibliography of 874 references, this manual has been prepared to assist those instructors who want to use group methods and individual projects in teaching the text.

Dr. McKinney joined the University faculty in 1931 and four years later established a Personality Clinic as a part of the University's Student Health Service. Until recently he spent much of his time counseling students about their social and emotional problems.



Gordon Blackmore

## Blackmore next president of alumni

Gordon Blackmore of Trenton will assume the office of national president of the University of Missouri Alumni Association on July 1, succeeding William R. Toler of Columbia. Blackmore was elected at the May 7 meeting of the board of directors; other new officers are three vice-presidents: Bradford Brett of Mexico, Edward Sowers of Rolla, and Howard Young of St. Louis. Re-elected were Executive Secretary G. H. Entsminger and Treasurer Hartley T. Banks.

Blackmore is vice-president of the Northwest Missouri Funeral Directors Association. He was graduated from the University in 1939 with a B.S. degree in Agriculture. He served four years as chairman of the Grundy County Alumni Committee and is now in his second term as District 2 representative on the national board. At Trenton he is chairman of the Industrial Steering Committee for Grundy County, and is a past president of the Lions Club, the Riverside Club, and all Masonic bodies in Trenton. He served five years in World War II and was a lieutenant colonel, 158th Regimental Combat Team in the Pacific.

The new alumni president married the former Miss Clara McCarty of Trenton in 1940. They have two daughters, Linda, a freshman at the University, and Julia, who is 11.