

Rex Whitton, U.S. highway boss

After forty years with the same employer, Rex M. Whitton has changed jobs for the first time since his graduation from the University. Last month he left his work as chief engineer of the Missouri State Highway Commission and moved to Washington where he has taken over duties as Federal Highway Administrator. He had been with the highway department since 1920, the year he received a B.S. degree in Engineering from M. U.

As President Kennedy's choice for Federal Highway Administrator, Whitton becomes director of the world's largest public works effort—construction of the new 41,000-mile interstate highway system and supervisor of 800,000 miles of existing federal highways.

He took the first step toward this big assignment eleven days after graduation when he went to work as a levelman with a surveying crew of the State Highway Department at \$110 a month. At that time the department had 200 employees; today there are 6,000. The highway system in Missouri consisted of 402 miles; today there are 32,000 miles, with 7,228 miles of major paved highway.

In 1952 Missouri's 10-year road program got underway and Whitton is generally credited with having been the driving force behind it. Missouri has led the nation in development of the interstate highway system and Whitton is largely responsible for that.

Whitton, born on a farm in Jackson County, lived on several farms during his boyhood and at one time milked ten cows twice a day. During his school days he hoed corn, plowed, shocked wheat and put up hay. In 1916 he was graduated from Hickman Mills high school and entered the University after working at Hillcrest golf club near Kansas City, mowing six putting greens a day during the summer. In his first two years at the University he waited on tables at one boarding house for his meals and made up beds at another for his room. Then, by working summers and borrowing, he got enough to pay his way the last two years. He went out for track and ran the mile but never earned a letter. He says his grades were "just average."

In working his way up through the ranks of the State Highway Department, Whitton handled a variety of jobs. In 1920 he was with a surveying crew, two years later was a plans engineer, and in 1924 was a project engineer. There followed a long line of advancements—chief of survey, plans designer, assistant district engineering in charge of plans and surveys, assistant in charge of construction, construction engineer, district engineer; and for 15 years he was engineer of maintenance. He became chief engineer in 1951, and since that time has been widely recognized for his work. He received the George S. Bartlett Award in 1958 for his "outstanding contribution to highway progress" at the 57th annual convention of the American Road Builders Association. In



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1956 he served as president of the American Association of State Highway Officials, was named to the executive committee in 1954 and reappointed in 1957. He is also a past chairman of the executive committee of the Highway Research Board.

Whitton is a past president of the Rotary Club in Jefferson City, where he was a member of the Boy Scout Board. He is a trustee of William Jewell College at Liberty.

In 1925 Whitton married the former Callie Maud Lowe of Blue Springs, who was a student in the College of Arts and Science at the University in 1924. In his highway work throughout the state, they moved thirteen times in the first eleven years of their marriage, living most of the time in boarding houses and furnished apartments. They have a son, Rex M. Whitton, Jr., and three grandchildren. The younger Whitton, now with Southwestern Bell Telephone Company in St. Louis, received a B.S. in C.E. in 1953 and his wife, the former Doris Jeanne Butler, was in the School of Business and Public Administration that year.

Heads national society

Dr. Samuel Sandmel, A.B. '32, Provost of Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, New York, is the new president of the Society of Biblical Literature and Exegesis, the national organization of America's Bible Scholars. He was elected at the Society's 96th annual meeting, held at Union Theological Seminary in New York City.

Under a fellowship grant awarded by Brown University, Dr. Sandmel prepared a book on the New Testament, *A Jewish Understanding of the New Testament*, which is considered one of the most significant recent publications in the field of religion.