

Eastern Progress

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Farewell, President O'Donnell

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WEDNESDAY, APRIL 5, 1960

The Courier-Journal
W. F. O'Donnell Is Chosen President of Eastern

To Assume
New Position
On July 1

Has Been Superintendent
of Richmond City Schools
For Past 15 Years

Howdy and Congratulations, O'D

That may sound a little informal as a greeting to a man who has been elevated to one of the most exalted posts within the education system of the Commonwealth, but that's the way we feel about it.

You've been our neighbor for 14 years... we know you well... now you want us to feel that way about it.

RICHMOND DAILY REGISTER
Wednesday, May 18, 1960

Transy To Bestow
30 Degrees Today



President O'Donnell First To Retire From Eastern

On June 30th, Dr. W. F. O'Donnell, one of the Commonwealth's most beloved and respected educators, becomes the first president ever to retire from Eastern Kentucky State College.

His retirement becomes effective at midnight on that date, at which time Dr. Robert R. Martin, an Eastern graduate who has served as State Superintendent of Public Instruction and more recently as Commissioner of Finance, assumes duties as Eastern's sixth chief administrator.

Dr. O'Donnell, who has served the state's largest state college since July 1, 1951, lays aside his duties with pride in his accomplishments and a sincere belief that Eastern will continue to grow, surpassing even the most remote dreams of many optimistically-minded people who are close to the college.

The Texas-born Irishman has seen Eastern grow in size of the student body from 981 students in 1941, when he succeeded Dr. H. L. Donovan, who left Eastern to become the president of the University of Kentucky, to nearly 3,000 students today.

Of the total number of degrees, 8,543, conferred upon her graduates since the first degree was granted in 1925, Dr. O'Donnell has presented all but 1,798, or a total of 6,745 during his nineteen year administration.

The beloved administrator has seen the campus grow in size. During his administration, a total of \$4,624,000 has been spent in capital outlay. And, construction in progress now totals another \$3,319,000. The current plant value, exclusive of the construction in progress, which includes two dormitories, eighty units for married students, a new laboratory school, a water tower and lines, and sprinkler systems, is \$7,040,000. New buildings and renovations during his "tour of duty" include the Veterans' Homes for

married students in 1945, at a cost of \$125,133.01; the addition to the Weaver Health Building in 1948 at a cost of \$260,324.73; the Science Building, with some of the finest and best equipped laboratories in the South, in 1952, at a cost of \$674,382.48; the renovation of Sullivan Hall, formerly a men's dormitory, but now used by freshmen women, in 1954 at a cost of \$176,941.80; the building of Keith Hall in 1954 at a cost of \$534,623.00; the Music Building in 1956 at a cost of \$575,000.00; renovation of Burnam Hall, dormitory for women, in 1958 at a cost of \$32,783.77; and the building of O'Donnell Hall, dormitory for men, named in his honor, in 1958, at a cost of \$534,000.00.

In the planning stages now are an industrial arts and maintenance building, a new boiler and automatic coal handling equipment, a men's dormitory, a women's dormitory, and a fire detection system in Burnam Hall.

The genial O'Donnell accepts no part of the praise for the growth of the college. Instead, the modest gentleman credits her growth to the students, the faculty members, and the alumni. He has said on many occasions that it was through the leadership of the student body, the faculty, and alumni that Eastern has grown and developed the outstanding reputation she now enjoys.

He, in fact, has never been one for demanding recognition. Even as a youth on the Texas ranch, where he grew up, he admits that he left the bronco-busting antics to his brothers. "They did a lot of that," he muses, "while I was tending fences and doing the work around the ranch."

"O. D.," as he is known to many of his close friends and family, is known by many as the man singly responsible for hundreds of eastern Kentucky students having the opportunity to receive a college education. He has given willingly and openheartedly of his time and finances in helping students who could not afford to enter college without aid. Noted for his convincing methods of reforming students who get started on the wrong track in college, he has counseled many students who have come to him, telling him of their planned withdrawal from school. A good number of those entering his office, or home, for that purpose, have been converted and went on to achieve honors in college.

Never, in fact, has he refused to talk to a student about his problems. His door, both in the office and at home, is never closed.

Dr. O'Donnell was born on a ranch in Burnet County, Texas, seventy years ago.

Named for his father, the late William Francis O'Donnell, who had left County Cork, Ireland in 1847 because of the potato famine, he has a Kentucky background in that his maternal grandfather, John Beasley, was a native of Lincoln County, migrating to Texas later.

He attended the rural schools of Burnet County and was graduated from the Burnet High School. In 1908 he became a resident of Kentucky when he came to Transylvania College through the influence of the late M. B. Brown, a graduate of the Lexington college and for twenty years deputy state superintendent of public instruction in Texas.

Attending Transylvania and the University of Kentucky from 1908 to 1912, Dr. O'Donnell was graduated in 1912 from Transy where he was a member of the two honorary scholarship and leadership fraternities, Book and Bones, and Lampas Club.

Upon graduation from Transy, he went to Carrollton to become principal of the high school there. After one year as principal, he was elected city superintendent of schools and served in that capacity for thirteen years.

In 1926 he was elected superintendent of the Richmond city schools. While administering the Richmond schools, he became a member of the summer school faculty of Eastern. He also taught in the summer school at Morehead State College.

Mr. O'Donnell attended Teachers College of Columbia University where he completed work for the master of arts degree in 1932. On June 8, 1943, he was awarded an honorary LL.D. degree from Transylvania College in Lexington.

He is past president of the Richmond Rotary Club, an organization which, just this spring, honored him by presenting him with a lifetime membership. For twelve years he held the position of president of the Kentucky High School Athletic Association and is also past president of the Central Kentucky Education Association. He has served as trustee of the State Teachers' Retirement System and was a member of the Personnel Council of Kentucky.

From 1950 through 1954, he served as a member of the Visitation Committee of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education and for two years represented the Association on the American Council on Education. He is now a member of the President's National Advisory Committee of the White House Conference on Aging, the meeting to be held in Washington, D. C., in January, 1961.

In 1909, while a student at Transylvania, he married Miss Madeline Riley, of Bertram, Texas. They have two daughters, Mrs. James A. Miller, Jr., Louisville, and Miss Margaret O'Donnell, Covington, and two sons, Dr. W. F. O'Donnell, Jr., Hazard, and James Riley O'Donnell, Ridgeway, New Jersey.

What does the soft-spoken and genteel O'Donnell and his lovely wife plan to do now? They have bought a six-room home on Ridgeway Drive, overlooking the Eastern campus in Richmond. This is quite a contrast to the old 14-room mansion they have occupied for the past nineteen years.

Mrs. O'Donnell will spend a lot of time on her flower gardens, for which she has quite a reputation among the flower growers in Central Kentucky.

Dr. O'Donnell will look forward to opportunities to speak to groups on the campus and to attend programs presented at Eastern. The couple will continue to enjoy their evening strolls thru the beautiful campus that they have seen grow so much. It is an every day occurrence that finds them walking along through the beautiful amphitheater, or along a campus walk.

When he puts aside his official duties as president, he plans to take a well deserved rest, then take his wife on a visit to California, stopping by to visit the old family ranch. In his nineteen years at Eastern, he has been away from the campus only three weeks.

He will spend the rest of his days in Richmond and perhaps write his memoirs.

(Continued on Page Three)

President O'Donnell, because of your many years of devotion and interest in the student body and college, your warm understanding and unflinching encouragement, we of the Progress staff take this opportunity to honor you by dedicating this final issue of the Eastern Progress to you.—The Editors, Jean Patterson and Sandy Wilhoite.

Dr. W. F. O'Donnell, President Eastern Kentucky State College
Dear Sir:

We, the student body of Eastern, would like to take this opportunity to say a sincere "thank you" for giving yourself to Eastern for these nineteen years.

No words can express the appreciation and love we have for you. You have been our example, our supporter, our friend, and our standard-bearer. Through your tireless efforts we have grown in quantity and quality. You have brought us from the status of a good, small college to that of a good, large college; and, on the foundation that you have laid, we will continue to grow.

In closing, may we paraphrase a comment of Abraham Lincoln. The world may little note nor long remember, but we, the students of Eastern, have noted and will always remember.—In fond farewell, Joe Graybeal, President Student Council.

President W. F. O'Donnell Eastern Kentucky State College

Those of us who have been identified with the administration of the college during your term as president desire to extend to you our best wishes upon your retirement after your many years of useful service to Eastern. You have had the privilege to serve Eastern during a most interesting period in the life of the institution. The world scene, too, has been a most interesting one. It has been a period of tremendous change and growth in many areas of human endeavor.

Upon retirement you will have the opportunity to do many things which you have had to neglect because of your duties on the campus. We wish for you long years of health and happiness.

To Mrs. O'Donnell we offer our thanks for her graciousness through the years. May the best of everything come to the both of you.—Cordially your friend, W. J. Moore, Dean.

Editor, Eastern Progress:

We of the faculty comprise a large and diverse family, each member of which possesses his own unique talents, interests, academic loyalties, and convictions.

The role of father over a family of such proportions and diversities is, needless to say, a demanding job. It is a role requiring the ut-

most patience, understanding, and diplomacy, a role demanding much personal sacrifice, and a role which could only be filled by the most loyal, devoted, and dedicated of persons.

Such a "Dad" we have had here at Eastern. President O'Donnell has filled the role and filled it well. He has listened patiently to our problems, been sensitive to our complaints, and has shared with us the ups and downs, the joys and disappointments from year to year.

For these reasons and more too numerous to mention, the members of his faculty family take this opportunity to say, "Thanks, O'D."—Signed: Dean Gatwood, Chairman, Faculty Club Board of Governors.

Pres. O'Donnell First To Retire

(Continued from Page 2)

At an athletic banquet just this spring at the college, he warned the coaches to reserve two choice seats at every ball game because he doesn't plan to miss a single one. "If you look toward my seats," he said, "and I'm not in one of them and Mrs. O'Donnell in the other, please check to see if my health has failed me."

He passed notice along to James E. Van Peurse, head of the music department, that he could expect to see him at all the musical performances on the campus. Never have they passed up a program given by the fine music department.

Dr. Martin, who will become Eastern's sixth president, is an Eastern graduate who was awarded the "Outstanding Alumnus" award in 1956. He commented upon being named as Eastern's chief administrator by saying: "I am honored to be chosen president of my alma mater. Eastern is a great

institution which has enjoyed splendid leadership throughout its history. Fortunately, I will have the counsel and guidance of the retiring president, who has served Eastern so long and well."

Preceding Dr. O'Donnell in the presidency of Eastern were Ruric Nevel Roark, 1906-1909; John Grant Crabbe, 1910-1916; Thomas Jackson Coates, 1916-1928; and Dr. H. L. Donovan, 1929-1941.



Mrs. O'Donnell will have more time to enjoy her hobby of raising flowers.



President and Mrs. O'Donnell enjoy a quiet evening at home. After his retirement, the President can sit back and relax more often.

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Buildings Erected During President O'Donnell's Administration



SCIENCE BUILDING, 1954



KEITH HALL, 1958



THE MUSIC BUILDING, 1957



O'DONNELL HALL, 1959