



C. O. "Pop" Shirley



A familiar and expected sight at any sorority function, including conventions, was Pop Shirley and his "66" pants, not to mention cowboy boots and hat, plaid shirt, suspenders and pipe. Pop was envied by many men in the company as the only male member of JPS.

He's remembered as a little pixie of a fellow, eyes twinkling, usually with mischief, smelly pipe and big 66 letters implanted on the seat of his pants. But more than that, he's remembered for his caring. He was C. O. "Pop" Shirley, JPS' only male member at that time.

Small in size, but big in accomplishments, Pop was our "man Friday" from the day JPS organized. Always there to help, he'd set up chairs for parties and meetings, shift furniture in the clubrooms, move pianos or dish up food. Anything the girls needed, he'd see it was done.

It was little wonder that in 1937 the Janes voted to make Pop a member of the club. "Pop" Shirley wore his jeweled society pin until his death in 1978.

Pop's life was as colorful as his personality. At the age of 13, he was winding magnetos for Bell Telephone Company in Kansas City, Missouri, then repairing telephones and stringing lines. Quoted in Philnews, Pop said: "Phones go bad on both sides of the track. I made the dope dives, the bawdy houses, the gambling joints and the swankiest homes and apartments. What I heard and saw with a pair of pliers in my hand would fill a book."

After 22 years of this work, Pop wanted to try his luck in the oil fields. Joining Phillips in 1919, he dug ditches, wrestled pipe and took on stillman duties. About that time, the company badly needed a communications system between field operations and Bartlesville. Pop jumped in, dashing all over the Southwest in his Model T car, shinnying up telephone poles and stretching wire.

Pop took a break from this hectic life in the late 1920s and managed Woolaroc ranch, becoming fast friends with Aunt Jane and Uncle Frank. However, two years later, he was again needed in communications.

In 1935, Pop's health began to fail, and he took a less strenuous job as building superintendent. When JPS began to make waves in 1937, Pop was the man to see when help was needed.

Pop seldom missed a Bartlesville party, a familiar sight in checkered shirt, cowboy boots and 66 pants, and attended several national conventions, including the first one in 1939 at Kansas City, Missouri. There was also a bit of the devil in Pop Shirley. Early members recall Pop taking 20 Janes to their first burlesque, "guarding them like a rooster in a hen house."

Poor health forced Pop to retire in 1945 at the age of 60. Taking it easy, Pop still did what he could for JPS and the Men's Club. Until his death, his JPS sisters remembered him with telegrams, birthday cards and gifts. Many members visited Pop at his home. As might be expected, Pop owned two ornery parrots who delighted in cussing him out in front of his visitors, a special treat for JPSers.