

Professor's Philosophy Steeped in Practicality.

By Charles Hammer.

(A Member of The Star's Staff.)

WHAT impresses the casual visitor to Dr. Norman Royall's office is his voice.

Rich and booming, it fills the green-painted little room as, leaning back in his old swivel chair, Dr. Royall meditates aloud on his 15 years at the University of Kansas City.

Consistency of View.

Even more striking to the visitor is what the mathematics professor is saying — what he has been saying since he became a college teacher more than 30 years ago.

"Young people, you see, are willing to learn. They have open minds," he said. "But they know the world they are coming into has been made a mess of. I try to convince them that it was bad when we inherited it, too."

"I tell them no generation gets a clean shot at it."

Window light streaming into the dim office outlines his features—a profile strangely like an actor's, his wavy, graying hair combed back softly from a classic brow.

"Teaching is the finest thing you can do in the world," the 54-year-old professor said. "You devote your life to the attempted increase of rationality in the world."

Hope in Wisdom.

"And in the long run, the only thing that will protect this world and this country is not the building of bigger bombs. It is a general increase in wisdom and rationality."

Regardless of the quality of his conversation, however, a professor is more than what he says. He is what he has done and is doing.

For Norman Royall, it all started back in Columbia, S. C., and De Land, Fla., the towns

where he was reared, the son of well-educated parents. The intellectual cast of his life already had been set when—at the age of 15 and before completing high school — he entered John B. Stetson university.

It was there that he developed what seems to many to be the great dichotomy of his life: a passionate love for music, the fine arts, philosophy and social science plus a permanent entanglement with mathematics and science.

Seeks a Balance.

The young Royall began by enrolling in an analytical mechanics course and a philosophy course which met at the same hour. He alternated between the two classes, and it was not until the first exam that his instructors caught on.

"The dean gave me hell," the professor explained, "but after that he helped me exploit both interests."

Plugging away at his music, Dr. Royall sang at both ends of the metaphysical spectrum. For friends he sang the role of Mephistopheles in the opera "Faust." He was the Christos in a public performance of the "Matthew Passion" of Bach.

But the degrees he took—a master's in economics, a master's in mathematics - physics and a doctorate in mathematics—leaned to the scientific side.

Approaching in his breadth of knowledge (distantly, according to Dr. Royall) the ideal of the Renaissance man, the professor defends this type of education. Plato's philosophical academy in ancient Athens, he points out, had above its door the motto:

"Let no one enter here who is ignorant of geometry."

Since coming to the University of Kansas City in 1947, Dr. Royall has been one of the intellectual moving forces of Kansas City. He was a founder and the first director of the Great Books program here.

Although Dr. Royall no longer participates, the program he helped found is contributing to the education of 2,100 Greater Kansas Citizens, who read the classics of world literature and discuss them in Great Books sessions.

Insight to Science.

Thousands of students have felt the influence of his mind in his 10-semester-hour, full-year course on the foundations of natural science. Virtually unique in the nation, it is designed for the student who will not be a scientist but who seeks an understanding of the inner spirit of scientific thinking.

Instead of taking up biology, chemistry and physics separately, students figuratively peek over the shoulders of the greatest scientists of history as they make their discoveries. The students learn theory in detail through laboratory work.

A measure of the breadth of the course is the fact that readings for the opening session, in which the theoretical beginnings of the universe are described, include not only scientific works but Genesis, Chapter 1.

"We want students to catch the spirit of creativity found in original scientific research," Dr. Royall explained. "We want them to learn that science involves a whole rational approach to problem solving."

Glasses and Tweed.

As academic and theoretical as the average professor, Dr. Royall's scholarly glasses and tweed camouflage a practical aspect.

For the business school at the university, he teaches a course in operations research, a new discipline which increasingly is helping companies use a myriad of new information to bring maximum profits.

He travels throughout the country speaking to business groups, explaining operations research, electronic computers and the impact of automation.

Suavely respectable when speaking before bankers, the professor has never hesitated to be unconventional. In 1955, Dr. Royall, his wife, Helen Royall, and their daughter, Jo Alice Royall, criss-crossed Italy and then crossed the Alps in a motor scooter with side car.

When Dr. Royall brought it home for use in breezy jaunts around the campus, his students

picked up the idea for use in skits on Bum Friday, a spring holiday.

Student Re-enactment.

A student (everyone knew who it was supposed to be) rode onto the stage in a kiddie-car. It always brought the house down.

"Now that I've given the scooter away, they'll have to think of something else," Dr. Royall said.

Kidded on Bum Fridays, the professor gets respect enough during the rest of the year. While the visitor was in his office this week, a nervous-looking freshman appeared at his door to ask for the return of a test paper.

"Why were you not in class this morning?" Dr. Royall inquired.

"It was the first time I've missed, sir," replied the young man.

"That was not what I asked." "It was because I overslept." The student looked at his hands.

"Well, now, confession is good for the soul, isn't it?" the older man said.

The teacher and his student grinned.



A VETERAN PROFESSOR at the University of Kansas City, Dr. Norman Royall describes a problem in the mathematics of conic sections.