



By SEAN MATTHEWS, FOR THE OKLAHOMAN

Nate Waters, who graduated Saturday from Oklahoma State University, greets commencement speaker Boone Pickens, who sponsored much of Waters' rehabilitation after he was injured in a fight.

Pickens advises OSU graduates

By Ken Raymond, Staff Writer

Speaking at Oklahoma State University's commencement ceremony Saturday morning, Dallas billionaire Boone Pickens advised graduates to stay involved with OSU and give back to their college community.

"What will it take to move us to the next level ... and make this a world-class institution, both in academics and athletics?" Pickens asked. "It's OSU alumni. That's what it's going to take. People just like you and me."

Pickens, a 1951 alum, spoke to about 1,000 graduating seniors Saturday at two commencement services.

The morning session was for graduates of the Spears School of Business, the College of Human Environmental Sciences and the College of Engineering, Architecture and Technology.

The afternoon session hosted those from the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources, College of Arts and Sciences, College of Education and the Center for Veterinary Health Sciences.

Pickens discussed his rise from Depression-era Holdenville to his status as one of Forbes Magazine's 400 richest Americans, telling graduates they are capable of anything.

"There's more opportunity for success today than ever," said Pickens, who operates BP Capital, an energy-

focused investment fund. "America remains the greatest country in the world. There's plenty of opportunity to go around."

After his morning speech, Pickens told *The Oklahoman* he wants to see OSU's proposed athletic village built quickly. Pickens has pledged \$30 million to help the university acquire about 100 acres of land for the village — a potential purchase that would displace residents of about 310 houses, duplexes and apartment buildings.

"Look at me," he said. "I'm 77. I don't have a five-year plan. I mean, I don't have. I'm in a hurry to do things, and I want to see us attain the level ... to be in contention. I don't think we're going to, you know, go in and win every game. I'm not silly enough to think that."

"But I want when we play and the game's over that the opposing team knows they had a contest — it was tough — and our guys leave the field head up and our fans leave the field head up."



Boone Pickens

Future businessman overcomes paralysis

By John Estus, State Correspondent

STILLWATER — Nate Waters smiled all day. He grinned and shook hands with at least three dozen fellow graduates, faculty and friends before he crossed the stage Saturday to receive a marketing degree from Oklahoma State University.

Nothing could ruin this day, not even his tragic past. The deep-voiced man hasn't moved his legs since his mother's boyfriend hoisted Waters off the floor and body-slammed him, head first, during a fight at his mother's Tulsa apartment in 1997.

"I woke up out of sedation with the doctor telling me I would be paralyzed for the rest of my life and I would never walk," said Waters, now 27. "But I will walk again."

On Saturday, Waters' brightest smile came after the ceremony as he sat at lunch between his beloved aunt and one of his best friends, OSU graduate and mega-donor Boone Pickens, who was commencement speaker.

Pickens had just given him a dream

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gift: a round-trip ticket to Dallas to eat lunch with Pickens and tour BP Capital, the oil and gas tycoon's investment company.

Pickens also gave Waters \$1,000 to buy new suits, because starting in January he will be working full-time as a market researcher for Tulsa-based Williams Cos. Inc. He has worked there nearly a year as a part-time trader's assistant.

Waters met Pickens in Tulsa in early 2003, when his passion for the oil and gas industry led him to pay a \$20 cover charge to listen to

Pickens' speech.

He impressed Pickens enough after the speech to score a business card. Months later, Pickens decided to sponsor his rehabilitation.

After the paralyzing fall, Waters decided he could "either waste away in a nursing home, or capitalize on my youth and go to school and be productive in society."

A resident of Leisure Village Nursing Home in Tulsa, Waters earned his degree from OSU's Tulsa campus by taking public transportation to class every day, then going to the library, where he studied and researched investments.

Pickens had a bright smile of his own Saturday when he said watching Waters graduate was "the greatest thing of the day."