A Former President Speaks

Dr. Joseph Brandt takes typewriter in hand to give alumni a glimpse of his administration and of the motives and men who served with him.

By Joseph A. Brandt, '21ba

Editor's Note: In the May issue of Sooner Magazine, a series of articles by Dr. Roy Gittinger, '02 ba, regents professor of history, was completed. This particular issue spotlighted the class of 1944. In telling the background information of the period from 1929 to 1944, Dr. Gittinger tells the story of the administration of former University President Joseph A. Brandt, '21ba, Dr. Brandt, who is now pioneer chairman of the first Graduate Department of Journalism at UCLA, read the story concerning his tenure of office and asked Sooner Magazine to "save him a little space" so that he might have a chance to correct "some inaccuracies and misunderstandings."

We are herewith offering Dr. Brandt's report. For a completely fair comparison and discussion of the two stories, may we urge you to read Dr. Gittinger's story on page 20 in the May, 1950 Sooner along with Dr. Brandt's article.--D. B.

EVer since I resigned the presidency of the University of Oklahoma, I have refrained from making any defense or explanation or correction when unfair or unwarranted attacks have been made upon my administration. My conscience has been perfectly clear about my two and a half years in office. I know that I carried out the program in my heart that the stepsthe Regents and I took in making any defense or explanation or correction might have a chance to correct "some inaccuracies and misunderstandings." I am proud of the fact that every single major reform I introduced at Oklahoma was approved in each instance by an unanimous vote of the members of the Board, and these reforms included my establishment of the Research Professorships on my last day in office.

Anyone at all familiar with the stormy history of higher education in Oklahoma must realize, therefore, that my administration, taken as a whole, represented a plan of action with which the Board was in general agreement before I assumed the office of President, and did not represent capricious or arbitrary brainstorm of a headline seeker.

Then, for the third time in the course of a year I had refused to let my name be considered for the presidency, I was asked to submit an outline of needed reforms for the University, I did so, thinking of course that they represented such a radical departure that I had effectively discouraged the Board from any further consideration of me. To my consternation, my suggestions had quite the opposite effect and I was subjected to such pressure, not only from members of the Board but also from leading citizens of Oklahoma, that I finally yielded.

I know that as president my aim was not only for the betterment of the University and to bring it on an educational level with other leading universities. I worked hard and loyally and I did my best. Any mistakes I made were no worse than other men in the same position have made—no one is perfect, and no president at the University of Oklahoma has ever pleased all people at the same time. My administration was a stormy one because uprooting and spading is always a turbulent task and that is what the Regents wanted and what I felt the school needed. Because I changed the status quo, I made many enemies, but I know in my heart that the steps the Regents and I took were the right ones, and your present President has told me that his task would have been an impossible one but for the unpleasant spade work done during my administration.

So I do not write this in defense. I have no apology to make. The time has come when I am impelled to clarify some aspects of my administration, because Dean Gittinger, whom I have always admired and respected as a truthful, conscientious, and fair-minded person, has made several incorrect statements in his radio speech which was reprinted in the May issue of Sooner Magazine. I am confident that with his sense of rectitude he would be the first to welcome these corrections and grant me the right to state my case.

For the sake of brevity I shall confine myself to those avenues to which his provocative radio address gave a green light—but in doing so, I find it necessary to paint a historical background. A small group of people has frequently implied that I was not as loyal to President Bizzell as he was to me. Nothing could be further from the truth. One of the richest memories of my life was the ten years I spent as director of the University of Oklahoma Press. Two things were perhaps as dear to President Bizzell's heart as anything could be—the Press and the Library. During the formative years of the Press and when I was editor of The Sooner Magazine, I saw the President at least two or three times a week. No matter how busy he was, he would always take time out to talk about books and about the future.

During these interviews, he always talked freely about his own hopes for the University. ... I was very happy indeed when the senior class during my administration voted to have as its class gift to the University a statue of President Bizzell but I was dumbfounded when the president of the class interpreted my suggestion that the statue be placed in front of the library as a slight to President Bizzell. I knew what the library meant to him and I felt it would be tragic not to place the statue there. The president of the senior class thought of the south oval as the back door—but President Bizzell, as a true educator, knew that the Library was the front door to learning.

While the President was unswerving in his loyalty to the Press and to me, not all of his administration was, as Dean Gittinger says. On three separate occasions, without the President's knowledge, members of his staff tried to destroy the Press. I had the loyalty and support and confidence of a small group of productive scholars who saw what Dr. Bizzell did in the Press—a realization of research and a truly great contribution to the cultural wealth of the state. Without those enthusiastic professors who entrusted their manuscripts to a young Press which had up to then not existed and without Dr. Bizzell's unqualified support, the Press work I did would never have produced a University Press. Even when John Joseph Mathews' Wah-hon-Tah became the first Book-of-the-Month, men on the administrative staff tried to destroy the Press, and only when I invited these critics to a showdown before the President and found that this was the last thing they wanted, did I realize that they were acting without the President's knowledge.

The last time was after Paul B. Sears' Deserts on the March had attained a national success; this time, a committee without consulting me made a report to the President which, if adopted, would have destroyed the Press that the President had so loyally supported and in which my colleagues and I had worked so hard. The President refused to accept my resignations and the night before going to the hospital to be treated for ulcers, I had it out, at the President's request, with the committee. The result was that the recommendations were withdrawn and the Press was saved.

Not until an Eastern university recognized the worth of the Press by offering me a directorship of its Press at more than twice my salary, was I $3,120 a year when I left, did the state and campus really see what they had in the Press. It already had a national reputation when Savoie Lottinville (director of the Press) took over and Mr. Lottinville has taken that foundation and built one of the most outstanding university presses in the country, and through the Press, Oklahoma is known and respected throughout the scholarly world both in this country and abroad. This was what President Bizzell had dreamed of, and it is a source of pride to me in being in the Press and having kept it going against obstinate reaction, and it must be a similar source of pride to Mr. Lottinville, who worked so loyally for five years as business manager.

Dean Gittinger is quite correct when he says I had had no teaching experience, but that is no indication at all that I was not called upon to participate in administrative affairs. I was a professor both at Norman and at Princeton, and in that capacity I was called upon to perform the tasks usually assigned to that title. I was serving on seven committees when I left Norman in 1938. At Princeton I served on various administrative committees. Actually, the trend I am away from making a teaching staff member president. My "flair for publicity" was not for personal gain—I hated the publicity part of the job.

As to the story Dean Gittinger tells about the 50th anniversary celebration, I cannot answer that one because this is the first time I have ever heard it, and to my knowledge there is not one word of truth in it. Before I went to Princeton I served on the centennial committee making plans for the celebration. It was to be a great occasion and should have been. However, I am not in any way personally responsible for the raid on Pearl Harbor and the curtailing of travel necessitated by the event of war, which is the only reason the centennial was not held as planned. I do not know what
newspaper as saying in explanation of the
differential between cost per student at A. and M. and
at O.U., "I will explain it to anyone who cares to
come to my office and hear it privately."

Once and for all I should like to explain that I
never did ask everyone to call me Joe, and at no
time did I ever suggest or imply or want students
to call me Joe. I know how that story started. At
my first meeting with the Legislature and the press
some of my classmates and old friends were in
attendance. At one point one of them directed a
question to me and hesitated whether to say Doctor,
President or Joe. He had always called me Joe be-
fore this. I was anxious for people to know that I
did not intend to change my person and I wanted
people to feel that I regarded this job as a
service to the state in which I was working for
the betterment of the state just as the legislators
were—we were colleagues it seemed to me on
prettymuch the same level so to put them at ease
(and I really meant it and wanted it that way) I
said, "Just call me Joe as you always have." That
definitely did not imply that I wanted everyone to
call me Joe. I did prefer being called Mr. Brandt
to Dr. Brandt.

When Dean Gittinger states that I decided I
did not want to be a university president he is putting
it mildly. After I came to the office I did not want
to be a university president. I was happy in my
work at Princeton and it was richly satisfying. Life
for me and for my family was good. When the
idea was first proposed to me I laughed it off and
Mrs. Brandt was bitterly opposed to the idea being
entertained at all. After repeated refusal to con-
sider the proposal, the Regents finally asked me if
I would agree, before I finally said no, to meet
with them in Dallas at a secret meeting and they
urged that Mrs. Brandt come with me. We spent
a day with them discussing affairs of the Univer-
sity. The Regents stated that if I would not come,
I should propose what reforms I thought
were needed. The more I outlined what needed to
be done, the more determined they were that I
should come and help institute those reforms.

It was after a terrible personal struggle and a
feeling of great personal sacrifice that I ever agreed
to undertake the office and leave happiness behind
me at Princeton. I was made to feel by the Regents
that by working with them I could better salaries
for the faculty, and I felt that if I could bring about
faculty self-government and recognize the faculty
so that they would have the power to establish
educational policies of the University, it would be a
contribution worth bringing about.

The same men who had opposed many of Dr.
Bizzell's reforms opposed mine. The faculty wanted
increased salaries but they did not want govern-
mental responsibilities. With such an attitude my
program seemed fruitless of realization. I had
stated when I came that I did not consider the job
for more than a five-year term and that if the bud-
get were cut during that time I would leave. The
budget was cut and I decided the time had come.
In the meantime my own life was rapidly dis-
integrating and my family life was suffering be-

A Band Wasn't Necessary

Charles E. Engleman, '33b, and J. Leland Gourley, '40, have decided that
there is no day in June so "rare" that it is absent of Oklahoma hospitality.

Engleman, publisher of the Clinton Daily News, and Gourley, publisher of
the Henryetta Daily Free-Lance, recently left Henryetta for Sallisaw by bus, there
to board a train for New Orleans from which point they were to leave for a
Caribbean naval reserve cruise. Before beginning the trip they sent a wire to Wheeler
Mayo, publisher of the Sequoyah County Times at Sallisaw. Although the wire
stated: "Heeded for Sallisaw, Brass band to greet us will not be necessary," Mayo
alleged that the "not" was omitted in the copy of the telegram which he received.

In any case, when Engleman and Gourley arrived at Sallisaw, they were taken
into custody by an undersheriff and two deputies, who explained, "We're looking
for a couple of hot-check artists."

With only a few minutes until train time, Mayo appeared with a four-piece
brass band. He had caused the incident to allow himself time to round up the band
to welcome the editors, he asserted. In due respect to the honored guests, he gave the
two publishers keys to the city, then held a parade as they hurried to the railroad
station barely in time to make the train. The scene was pictured in two front-page
photos of the Sallisaw Democrat-American.

Later, on board the USS Sperry in the Caribbean, Gourley continued to write
his newspaper column. He insisted that a brass band had greeted him and Engle-
man at New Orleans, also, but admitted it was actually a "cleanup week" parade
which happened to be passing the station.
On the Sooner Scene... 

years for Friday night, October 13, before the O.U.—Texas Game in Dallas.

Alumni meetings were planned or held in Boston, Amarillo and Denver—travelled on alumni business to such Oklahoma towns as Chickasha, Duncan, Enid, Ardmore, Pauls Valley, Tulsa, Wewoka, Seminole and Oklahoma City.

The SOONER MAGAZINE came out as usual and on time.

Numerous meetings were held with the staff and others on plans for 1950-51. Voted twice.

Your alumni headquarters is a busy and fascinating place. Whenever you are on the campus, come by and see us. We are always glad to see a Sooner.

Roll Call...

where Andall is a student at the University school of medicine.

Sy Ramsey, '50journ, Cleveland, Ohio, has become a reporter for the El Reno Daily Tribune. While attending the University, he was a staff writer for the Oklahoma Daily.

Frank Costanza, '50pharm, and Mrs. Costanza are living in Wechawken, New Jersey, where he recently secured a position.

Alvin Boyd, '50law, Tipton, was recently appointed assistant county attorney of Tillman County.

John Westervelt, '50eng, secured a military leave of absence from Southwestern Bell Telephone Co., where he is employed in Oklahoma City, for a tour of duty as ensign in the United States Navy for the summer. He was assigned to an electronics school at Treasure Island, San Francisco. While attending the University, Westervelt received the bronze Letzciwer award, the Tom Boyd award, was named to Who's Who Among Students in American Universities and Colleges, served as president of Alpha Tau Omega fraternity, was a student executive officer in the naval R.O.T.C. and was a member of the Student Senate.

CONOVER-AMBROSE: Miss Louanne Conover, Oklahoma City, became the bride of Thomas Nathaniel Ambrose, Jr., '50 geological, in an evening ceremony June 22 in Crown Heights Christian Church, Oklahoma City. While attending the University, Ambrose was a member of Pick and Hammer Club and Alpha Tau Omega fraternity. After a ten-week European trip, the couple will make their home in New Brunswick, New Jersey, where Ambrose will enter Rutgers College to study for a master's degree in geology.

Frank E. Garner, '50ba, has accepted a position as teacher of English and psychology and as guidance counselor in the Ardmore high school for the coming school year.

ALLEY-DUGGIN: Miss June Alley, Woodward, became the bride of Thomas A. Duggin, '50ba, Woodward, on June 11 in the First Presbyterian Church, Oklahoma City. The couple is making their home in Midwest City. Affiliated with Sigma Epsilon fraternity, Duggin will return to the University this fall to begin graduate work.

SOTER-GALANIS: Kay Soter, '50ba, Oklahoma City, became the bride of Jerry Mike Galanis, Fon du Lac, Wisconsin, Sunday afternoon, June 25, in the Hellenic Orthodox Church in Oklahoma City. At the University, Mrs. Galanis was a member of Las Dos Americas Club. The couple is making their home in Fon du Lac.

BOECKER-JAMESON: Miss Carol Boecker, Kingfisher, and William Madison Jameson, '50 journ, Norman, were united in marriage Friday, June 9, in the First Christian Church, Kingfisher. Jameson was commissioned an ensign in the United States Navy in June and was assigned to a ship for active duty. The couple will make their home in Long Beach, California.

L. D. New, '50journ, and Mrs. June Sager, '50 journ, have been named Oklahoma and Texas editors, respectively, of the Texoman, weekly publication devoted to Lake Texoma. Now the official publication of the Lake Texoma Sportsman Club, the Texoman maintains offices in both Madill and Denison, Texas.

Robert C. Kumber, '50 journ, has been appointed editor of the Carrier Courier, semimonthly publication for carriers issued by the Oklahoma Publishing Co. While attending the University Kumber was editor of the Covered Wagon, campus humor magazine.

Brandt...

reality. Just as President Bizzell had stood for an adequate appropriation for the library building, so in turn made sacrifices in the building program to insure an adequate appropriation for the Institute. This was made by the Legislature but the war prevented the construction of the building until after I had left the campus.

As one who had lived under very adverse circumstances during the first years at the University, I was determined that whatever else I accomplished, I would not leave the campus without laying an adequate foundation for dormitories. This had also been a cherished ambition of President Bizzell but I had the fortune that townspeople, who had consistently blocked dormitory plans, were satiated with naval personnel. With the splendid aid of such men as Capt. John F. Donelson, Dean Arthur B. Adams, Walter Kraft, Savoie Lottinville, we secured a real beginning which I am happy to see President Cross carrying forward so magnificently.

It had been my aint to have all freshmen housed in dormitories, under a house plan, by which they would receive tutorial help in learning study habits. Several such houses were instituted, like Franklin House, but of course, the changing character of the student body as a result of the war caused the program to be abandoned. I hope some day the plan will be revived. The mortality among freshmen students is entirely too high and many of them can be saved under such a system.

But President Brooks and President Bizzell had a clear idea of what the University (i.e., a center of research) of Oklahoma should be. President Brooks had to content himself with pioneering. President Bizzell in his inaugural called on the faculty to reach out toward the real University and his constant aim was toward that end. Yet, when he tried early in his administration to divide the undergraduate program into a lower and an upper division level, it had recently been done at the University of Illinois, he found adamantine resistance in the administrative council, he told me. It was because of his experience that I was summary in the way in which the University College was introduced.

On the larger scope, however, because of the work already done, I was able to give increasing rewards for research, such as the Research professorships. I'm delighted that this plan has been extended to the great teachers of the University as well; too often we worship research to the exclusion of the good teacher whose role is moulding fine minds among undergraduates. President Cross, a wonderful teacher as well as scholar, is crystallizing the dreams and ambitions of his predecessors and adding to them his own rich contributions.

This is as it should be. A university is basically a conservative institution. Had I planned to spend the rest of my life as the president of the University, I would have sharply altered the tempo of reforms. On the other hand, had I done so, the danger would have been that most reforms would have been compromised in non-existence. My motives were through those of a loyal and devoted graduate to the University of Oklahoma who was impatient that the University take its rightful place with sister universities as a leader in education, an ambition not unique with me but one that had been shared by my two immediate predecessors. Perhaps I would have made no comment at all had not an able historian ascribed motives to me which I alone could know.

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