16 Years of Achievement

By ROSCOE CATE

In Both Physical Plant and Scholastic Reputation, the University Has Made Tremendous Gains in the Bizzell Era

SIXTEEN years have passed since William Bennett Bizzell, leaving an outstandingly successful career as president of Texas A. and M. College and associated schools, came to the University of Oklahoma to dedicate his energies and abilities to building and developing this state university.

As he prepares to retire August 1 from the presidency, and become president emeritus and head of the sociology department, a survey of the eventful years of his administration shows that President Bizzell has fulfilled the promises of his inaugural pledge to the utmost. In material progress, and in scholastic reputation, the University of Oklahoma has become a vastly different institution than it was when he walked into the president's office in the summer of 1925, hung up his hat, and went to work on a thousand different problems.

To some, it may seem that sixteen years have passed rapidly, that this period is only a short time. Yet it represents one-third of the entire life of the University. With all due respect to the valuable and capable work of the early administrators, it may be truly said that it is this last third of the University's life that has seen the institution flower into full stature as a well rounded, mature university.

Of the 21,607 degrees that have been conferred by the University since its establishment, President Bizzell has conferred 16,201. Of even more significance in showing the advances in scholarship is the fact that President Bizzell has conferred 2,151 of the 2,532 graduate degrees given by the University.

When President Bizzell came to the University 16 years ago, he found many things that challenged his immediate attention. The south boundary of the campus was back of the Administration Building. Behind this beautiful structure there was what amounted to a dump heap. Brooks Street was not paved and Asp was poorly surfaced. Classrooms were overcrowded. The teaching load was too heavy. The faculty salary scale was not adequate to keep good men from being lured away to better-paying jobs. The campaign for funds to build a Stadium and Union building was lagging. The campus "utilities department" consisted of a carpenter and a plumber and a few miscellaneous laborers who worked independently and were likely to come to the president's office each morning for instructions as to what to do.

Most discouraging of all to the new president, who had loved books all his life, was the smallness and inadequacy of the University library, then located in the building now used by the School of Art. The library on July 1, 1925, had only 65,500 volumes. The University had its own print shop, but was doing no publishing work of any consequence. The Extension Division was doing creditable work in a number of fields, but did not have a well rounded program.

President Bizzell had three major interests in mind as he tackled the difficult situation that faced him: (1) Establishment of a University Press to teach by means of the printed word; (2) Development of the University's research and graduate study program; and (3) Development of the extension program to bring about a "statewide campus."

All of these, of course, tied in together as part of a general program to raise the scholarship standards of the University. In his inaugural address, President Bizzell expressed his ideas upon the program of the University in somewhat more detail, expressing it in terms of objectives:

"1. The development of a more versatile and more conscientious citizenship.

"2. The attainment of a more stable and more satisfying social life.

"3. A human product better fortified against human ills and physical deterioration.

"4. A widespread dissemination of a knowledge of rational living.

"5. Insuring to society a surplus of material goods and social advantages."

During the first third of his administration, President Bizzell made tremendous strides toward putting his program into full effect. Then the full force of the economic depression hit Oklahoma and with it came drastic slashes in the state appropriations given the University. The last ten years of his administration, which President Bizzell has referred to as "the hardest ten years of my life," have necessarily been devoted largely to efforts to keep the University's standards high in the face of increasing enrollment and decreasing revenue. The way in which President Bizzell has maintained and even raised the scholastic ideals of the University during such a period of stress is perhaps his outstanding achievement, though it is intangible and not so obvious as the physical improvements made on the campus during the earlier years of his administration.

In recent years critics have sometimes remarked that President Bizzell "is not a good politician—he doesn't know how to deal with the legislature."

Yet it might be said, with good reason, that President Bizzell is probably the only man in America who could have got $560,000 from an Oklahoma legislature for a library building.

This was one of the first things the new president attempted when he came to the University from Texas. He found J. L. Rader struggling along as librarian with an inadequate building and the comparatively small number of 65,500 books.

"We can't build a great University with out a great library," President Bizzell told the members of the Board of Regents—and any one else who would listen.
He talked about it for a while and then he put $500,000 in the University's budget request to be presented to the next Legislature.

The regents looked at the $500,000 item, and smiled indulgently. "It's a nice idea," they said, "but you can't ever get it—not in this state." However there was one man on the board who was enthusiastic over the idea. He was John Rogers, '14 law, Tulsa attorney and oil man who is now a member of the State Board of Regents for Higher Education. Mr. Rogers, a man of scholarly interests as well as a successful business man, went to bat for the $500,000 library proposal, and finally it was left in the budget request that went to the legislature.

No one took the half million dollar project very seriously, at first. Finally President Bizzell appeared personally before a legislative committee to make his argument for the budget request. The committee suggested that they would give the University the library building if he would cut the amount to $200,000.

"It's not enough," President Bizzell replied. "It will take at least $500,000 and that will only build the first unit."

Committee members decided that a little horse trading was necessary. They upped their offer to $250,000, then $350,000. President Bizzell stood pat. It was a half million or nothing. Then legislators ran out of arguments. Here was a man who undoubtedly knew what a library ought to be. They weren't quite sure about it themselves. President Bizzell talked some more. He pictured what a great library would mean to the University, to the thousands of students of the future, to the cultural standards of the entire state.

He got the half million.

Actually, that wasn't the whole story. President Bizzell hadn't mentioned the cost of steel stacks. He went back to the legislature later and asked for $60,000 more for the stacks for the library building! The legislation was a bit stunned to find that the half million wasn't enough, but the equipment money was provided. By then, the whole state was proud of the library project.

The University library, with J. L. Radner still as librarian, now has more than 225,000 volumes, a Treasure Room containing many rare volumes of Elizabethan literature, and the valuable Phillips Collection of Southwestern Historical Materials. The present building was so designed that eventually it can be connected to the Administration Building with two wings, forming a quadrangle, which would provide stack capacity for a million books.

The beautiful library building is perhaps the best symbol of President Bizzell's administration, representing both the physical improvements he made on the campus.

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us, and the high ideals of scholarship he has stood for.

The better library facilities form one of the major items that have made possible the rapid development of the Graduate School in recent years.

Establishment of the University Press, which President Bizzell brought about to vitalize the function of teaching through the printed word is a major achievement of the last sixteen years. It was President Bizzell who brought Joseph A. Brandt to the O. U. campus in 1928 to begin a publishing program that has earned the University of Oklahoma national and world-wide recognition as a publishing center for scholarly and regional and historical material.

One of President Bizzell's innovations on the campus, which is not spectacular but which contributes greatly to the smooth functioning of the physical plant, was the organization of a utilities department soon after his arrival in Norman.

It is literally true that the small group of workmen engaged in repair and maintenance work on the campus reported to the president's office for instructions about where to do a little painting or where to repair a leaky faucet.

President Bizzell brought to the campus W. W. Kraft, an engineer who was successful in his profession and who came to Norman only in response to an urgent personal appeal from Dr. Bizzell.

"I've got to have your help in organizing a utilities department to run this physical plant," Dr. Bizzell told him. "The Board of Affairs is complaining about the way the power plant is run, and the carpenter and the plumber are worrying me about what they are supposed to do."

Kraft accepted the position as the University's first superintendent of utilities. Over a period of years and in spite of constantly reduced maintenance appropriations, he has kept the physical plant in good condition and has kept the utility services operating smoothly.

Visioning the importance of orderly development of the campus building program over a long period of years—both from the viewpoint of symmetry and for efficiency of operation—President Bizzell worked out a master plan of building arrangement with correlated heating and utility tunnels. This master plan will largely determine the location of future buildings on the campus and insure conformity to a carefully thought-out plan.

One of the major achievements has been development of the University of Oklahoma Medical Center in Oklahoma City. At the time Dr. Bizzell came to Norman, the first two years of medical work were given in Norman, and the remainder in Oklahoma City where clinical work could be done in connection with the University Hospital. For many reasons, it seemed desirable to combine all of the medical classwork in Oklahoma City if adequate facilities could be provided.

At that time, also, there was a movement in the state for a hospital for crippled children as it had been found that many Oklahoma children who faced the prospects of being crippled for life could be restored to normal physical condition by proper surgical care and hospitalization.

The University requested the Legislature to appropriate $500,000 for a Crippled Children's Hospital and $250,000 for a medical school building, both to be erected near the University Hospital and form the nucleus of a Medical Center of great value to the state.

With the active support of Lew Wentz, Ponca City oil man philanthropist who had founded the Oklahoma Society for Crippled Children, and Joe Hamilton, secretary of the society, the appropriation was voted by the legislature.

University officials were not entirely sure that Governor Henry S. Johnston would sign the building appropriation bill calling for $750,000 expenditure. President Bizzell and Lew Wentz called at the governor's office and explained how important they believed the proposed buildings were. Then Mr. Wentz told the governor that if he would sign the bill right then, that he would write a check for $50,000 to be added to the student loan fund he had already created at the University of Oklahoma.

"I remember that occasion, when the governor's signature meant the University was receiving $800,000, as one of the big thrills of the last sixteen years," Dr. Bizzell recalls.

The beauty of the University campus has been greatly improved in recent years, under the immediate supervision of Howard Jensen, landscape gardener. President Bizzell has taken an active interest in the development of beauty spots around the campus, such as the sunken garden back of the Administration Building, the formal garden between the Library and the Business Administration Building, the rock garden in the South Oval, and many other garden spots. The system of campus walks and streets has been vastly improved.

The major buildings added to the campus since 1928 include the Women's Residential Halls, completed in 1926; Buchanan Hall, 1926; Fieldhouse, 1937; School of Medicine Building and Crippled Children's Hospital, 1927-28; Ellison Imaginary, 1928; completion of Stadium, 1928; Oklahoma Memorial Union, 1928 (tower added in 1936); Petroleum Engineering Laboratory, 1929; Library, 1929; enlarging of Press Building, 1929; Business Administration Building, and Biological Sciences Building, 1936.

These are a few of the highlights of the tangible, physical improvements made on the University campus during the last sixteen years. However, if President Bizzell were asked to list the things that give him greatest satisfaction, he would probably list some of the intangibles—the vastly higher ideals of scholarship now existing on the campus, the much greater interest in good books, the state and national recognition given the University for its achievements in scholarly fields, and the great increase in the number of ways that the University is serving the general public of Oklahoma.

Dr. Bizzell said in his inaugural address: "The obligations of the state university cannot be completely fulfilled by offering instruction to a few thousand resident students. Education today is not restricted to the youth of the land. The thirst for knowledge has no age restrictions. The state-supported university must satisfy the intellectual hunger of every man and woman, regardless of age or place of residence within the state. We must, therefore, think of the state's geographical boundaries as the limits of the university campus and the people of the state should regard the buildings here in Norman merely as the reservoirs of knowledge that they may freely tap whenever they desire."

An examination of the records of the University radio station, the correspondence study department, the visual education library, the package library service, the lecture and entertainment bureau, the short courses and institutes program, and many other phases of the present University extension program shows that this ideal of a statewide campus has been made an actuality.

The reputation of the University of Oklahoma as an alive, progressive institution is a standard among other colleges and universities over the country in recent years that it has been possible to bring many outstanding young men to the O. U. faculty on a low salary scale. They know that experience and development on the University of Oklahoma staff adds much to their professional stature. If it were not for this ability to attract able young men to fill vacancies on the staff, the University would have suffered much more from the severe budget reductions of the last decade.

President Bizzell also has been unusually successful in holding the loyalty and enthusiasm of many faculty members who might easily obtain better paying positions elsewhere, but who have become so deeply interested in helping the University of Oklahoma solve its problems that they stay on here.

The improved scholastic standards and increase in graduate work and research work in general after President Bizzell...
One of Dr. Bizzell's dreams which went unfulfilled because of the economic depression was the erection of a group of science buildings on the campus. The first unit of the Biological Sciences Building, completed in 1936, was only a start of a program he had hoped to complete.

The story of President Bizzell's administration does not lie entirely in what he has done. The story, and very much of the story, lies in what President Bizzell is.

Through his work as administrative head of the University, through his thousands of contacts with the people of Oklahoma, he has become a symbol of character and integrity and the aliveness of higher education.

A man who can speak on the abstract subject "Scholarship" and hold the intent interest of a crowd of several hundred persons, as Dr. Bizzell as done on many occasions, who can inspire any average group of citizens in the cause of education, exerts a tremendous influence on the intellectual life of his state.

"Ignorance is a curse of God; knowledge is the wing wherewith we fly to heaven," is a quotation that President Bizzell has used in describing his conception of the obligation of a University to promote scholarship and learning.

A kindly man, President Bizzell has probably never been made really angry except on the few occasions when careless critics questioned, by implication, his integrity. Throughout his years as a college administrator, he has a written record of never having overspent the appropriations given him to administer; and he has been scrupulous in accounting fully for every penny entrusted to him.

From the man he really is has been displayed, not in the written records or the public prints, but in the dark hours when disaster threatened the University of Oklahoma and President Bizzell had to decide in his own heart and mind what he would do about it. These threats, during the last ten years, have been more numerous that the public realizes. The economic depression, and the suspicious attitude of several governors toward the University put President Bizzell in extremely difficult situations time and time again.

There were occasions, known only to close associates and a few alumni leaders, when Dr. Bizzell wanted very much to resign from the University rather than suffer personal indignities that were being forced upon him. That he decided, in every instance, to stay on and continue fighting for the welfare of the University is a demonstration of his unselfish love for the institution. And when he considered the time for his retirement was drawing near, it was his own suggestion of a resignation a year in advance of retirement that made it possible for the change in administration to be made with a minimum of lost motion.

Although it must have been a very human temptation to file his resignation and cast aside immediately all responsibility for the difficult problems faced by the University, it was thoroughly in character for him to agree to stay on as president while a successor was being chosen, and then to continue to serve the University and the state as head of the department of sociology.

A MAN of integrity, Dr. Bizzell is also a good citizen of Oklahoma. Aside from his purely educational interests, he has taken part in many worthwhile civic activities, and in national affairs.

He has served as president of the National Association of State Universities, as member of the Board of Visitors of the United States Naval Academy at Annapolis, member of directors of the Home Loan Bank, Topeka, Kansas, president of the Southwestern Social Science Association, and trustee of the Nelson Foundation at Kansas City, being the only one of the Nelson trustees who has served continuously since the trust was established.

As a member of the Norman Rotary Club, the Norman Chamber of Commerce and other local groups, he has also been a good citizen in his own community.

The Bizzell home, presided over by gracious Mrs. Bizzell, and containing Dr. Bizzell's extensive private library, has been a pleasant center of campus social life, where visitors were always welcome. In spite of the large amount of entertaining of distinguished guests that is inevitable in a president's home, the Bizzell family has maintained a normal home life. The Bizzell grandchildren have been frequent visitors at the White House, and in the last few years President Bizzell has often been seen walking down Boyd street in hand in hand with a grandchild.

Early in June, President Bizzell went to New York City and received from President Butler of Columbia University, largest university in the world, the University medal for Excellence. The citation read, "William Bennett Bizzell, president of the University of Oklahoma, constant leader in education and good citizenship." This is the highest award which Columbia confers upon its graduates.

One of the best word descriptions of President Bizzell was given by Kenneth Kaufman, '16, professor of modern languages, in an introduction at the class reunion last month.

"In all the years I have known Dr. Bizzell," said Mr. Kaufman, "and I have known him pretty intimately, and I have known him during times when the shedding was pretty rough, I have never known him to say an unkind word to or about anybody. I think that kindness is one of the characteristics of a great man; I have never known a great man who was not kind. I might go on and tell you a great many things about Dr. Bizzell, about his scholarship, about his love for books, about what he has done to promote the growth of literature in the Southwest, about the achievements he has accomplished; I might go on for a long time telling you things that would set this man apart; but to me his two outstanding characteristics are his love for books and his love for humanity. And it seems to me that if there is any one thing to be required of an educator it is that very gift of bringing humanity and books together."

Something of the student body's feeling toward Dr. Bizzell was expressed in the dedication of the 1941 Yearbook, which closed with the words, "He retires without a doubt as the best loved man in Oklahoma."

A dramatic tribute to President Bizzell from the president of the Board of Regents was presented as an unscheduled feature of the University Commencement exercises on June 9, 1941. The following tribute:

Doctor William Bennett Bizzell has been president of the University of Oklahoma for sixteen years. For almost fifteen years of that time, I have had the privilege of being a member of the Board of Regents. This has given me a most excellent opportunity to see and to know the President and the Man.

He has always been the thoughtful, scholarly, quiet type of executive, carefully avoiding the spectacular which so often causes friction and heartburnings, deliberately making improvements here and there after thoroughly considering men and policies, ever aiming at an orderly, smooth-working, highly efficient administration. Limited funds have been wisely and judiciously used to the end that our people may receive a dollar's worth of educational service for every dollar in taxes spent.

Under his administration, the University has experienced its greatest growth. The student body has nearly doubled in size, and yet Dr. Bizzell has always placed his emphasis upon scholarship, never upon mere numbers. Many useful buildings and much needed equipment have been added to our lovely grounds; but, unfortunately they have not kept pace with the growth of the student body.

His has been a constructive administration. Sound scholarship has been promoted. Broad, liberal culture has been advanced. True intellectual freedom has been fostered. Democracy has been emphasized; belief in and respect for the ideals and institutions of America have been encouraged. The spirit of the greatest Teacher of all has been nurtured.

He has been the guiding hand during these years of progress. What pride and joy must be his as he looks out upon this campus and back across the years! Even more, what greater pride must he have that greater joy of achievements in retrospect upon the thousands of young men and women passing across the commencement stage into an active life of greater citizenship and usefulness! Yes, and he must have gone more and womanhood—forever.

In so doing, his private life has been a notable example in right living. His Christian
character has been a tremendous influence for good. His home life, which is as gentle and beautiful as the flowers of spring, is admired by each and all.

Dr. Bizzell soon leaves the arduous duties of administration for his beloved field of teaching. He remains on the faculty as president emeritus and head of the Department of Sociology. Thus, our boys and girls will continue to receive wisdom and inspiration from a life so rich in experience.

Oklahoma is proud of Dr. Bizzell for what he is. Oklahoma is grateful to Dr. Bizzell for what he has done. He has richly earned from the state of his adoption the righteous verdict of "well done, good and faithful servant."

No short article could do more than select a few of the highlights from the Bizzell administration, and present a very small portion of the many, many public contributions that have been paid to the man's ability and character and qualities of personality that have endeared him to the people of Oklahoma.

To discuss President Bizzell's troubles with politicians would require a book in itself. The difficulty probably can be summed up in the simple statement that he just doesn't talk their language. Basically, President Bizzell and many of the politicians who have taken issue with him believe in the same general objectives for the University. But they have different methods of approach, different operating methods—and different ways of expressing their beliefs. So they never got together. In some ways it is unfortunate, but there has also been a very valuable result: the people of Oklahoma are thoroughly and completely convinced that President Bizzell has kept the University free of political meddling, and if it was necessary to pay a price for this independence, who can say that it wasn't worth while to pay whatever price was necessary to uphold the good name of the University.

President Bizzell has brought the University a great prosperity of physical improvements, a flourishing of scholastic maturity, an expansion of service to the general public of Oklahoma, a steady growth as a center of literature and art, and a growing vision of the importance of higher education to the welfare of a state.

The University of Oklahoma is fortunate in that Dr. Bizzell, in retiring from the duties of president, is willing to continue serving as president emeritus and as head of the department of sociology. In this state and in this nation, social science has lagged far behind the natural sciences. By taking the leadership in this phase of the University's program, Dr. Bizzell is going into a field with unlimited opportunities for achievement. He is not retiring. He is tackling a new responsibility with all the enthusiasm and loyalty to the cause of education that have made him a success in everything he ever tried.

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Lt. James H. Richards, '40ba, '40bs, formerly stationed at Fort Douglas, Utah, has been transferred to the proving grounds at Aberdeen, Maryland, for a two-months ordinance school.