
The Carl Albert Center

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President Jimmy Carter beams as Mr. Speaker Albert, right, congratulates his successor, Thomas P. "Tip" O'Neill, Jr.

Innovation in the Study of American Democracy

EDITOR'S NOTE: No Oklahoman ever has come closer to the presidency of the United States than former Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives Carl Albert. For weeks after scandal forced the resignation of Vice President Spiro Agnew in 1973, only a beleaguered Richard Nixon stood between Speaker Albert and the Oval Office. Again when Nixon resigned in 1974, Albert became the next in line until President Gerald Ford selected Nelson Rockefeller vice president.

By RONALD M. PETERS
Director
Carl Albert Congressional
Research and Studies Center

When Albert retired from Congress in 1976, the University of Oklahoma received his papers, which span 30 years of American history — the terms of six presidents, the McCarthy era, Korea, the Cold War, Vietnam, the Great Society, the civil rights revolutions, and the Nixon/Watergate affair. Overnight the already distinguished collections of the University of

Oklahoma Congressional Archive became a national treasure.

Guardianship of such a valuable congressional research resource dictated the development of an equally distinguished academic program. The Carl Albert Congressional Research and Studies Center is the University's innovative approach to the scholarly study and analysis of the legislative process which is the foundation of our representative democracy.

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If you were interested in the development of the Arkansas River Navigation project, where would you go for information? If you wanted to learn the truth about the controversial congressional race between Richard Nixon and Helen Gahagan Douglas, where would you look? If you wanted to study the relationships between the Oklahoma Indian Nations and the federal government, where would you begin? The answer to all of the above is the same: The Carl Albert Congressional Research and Studies Center at the University of Oklahoma.

Perhaps old politicians, like old soldiers, just fade away; but their papers survive them. For 40 former members of the United States Congress, the place of survival is the Carl Albert Center's Congressional Archive, one of the largest archives of its type in the country. As a part of OU's Western History Collections, the archive is the product of years of dogged work by the Western History curators — Gaston Litton, Arrell M. Gibson, Abe Hoffman and John S. Ezell — with significant help from James Babcock, Gilbert Fite and Jack Haley, all of whom have played important roles in acquiring these congressional papers. Currently, Congressional Archivist John Caldwell supervises the 40 collections, comprised of the papers of 13 U.S. Senators and 27 U.S. Representa-

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Oklahomans gather in Washington to honor former senators Thomas Gore and Robert Owen, from left (standing) Victor Wickersham, Ross Rizley, Paul Walker, Wilburn Cartwright, Lyle Boren, Wesley Disney; (seated) Jed Johnson, Elmer Thomas, Gore, Owen, Josh Lee. Although not among those pictured, Mike Monroney and Will Rogers autographed the photograph.

tives. Included are the papers of such prominent Oklahomans as Carl Albert, Robert S. Kerr, John Jarman, Page Belcher, Elmer Thomas, Thomas Gore, Happy Camp, Tom Steed, Fred Harris, Mike Monroney, and Dewey Bartlett, and such well-known non-Oklahomans as Helen Gahagan Douglas of California, Andrew Beimiller of Wisconsin and Carl Hatch of New Mexico.

Two years ago the University

capitalized on the presence of this distinguished archive by combining it with an academic program in the Department of Political Science to form a unique center for the study of the U.S. Congress. With the enthusiastic support of the University's Regents, the Oklahoma Regents for Higher Education, and the State Legislature, the Carl Albert Center was born. Its mission is to foster research and instruction on the Congress and the institutions of representative democracy through the growth and maintenance of the Congressional Archive and the development of strong academic programs at the graduate and undergraduate levels. Over the next few years, the Center will also sponsor conferences and lectures, and plans to develop a scholarly journal on congressional affairs.

The Carl Albert Center illustrates the University's strong commitment to attaining academic excellence by building from areas of strength. The Center also demonstrates what can be accomplished when that commitment is sustained by the cooperative support of the public and the private sectors.

The Center serves the needs of several constituent groups: the Univer-

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Sen. Robert S. Kerr shows President Kennedy around the Kerr ranch in 1961.

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Top: Franklin D. Roosevelt, with son Elliot, right, and Rep. Lyle Boren, tries whistle stop campaigning, a style adopted later by Fred Harris, above. Bob Kerr, right, uses a flatbed truck.

sity, its students and its faculty; scholars from around the country; members and former members of Congress; the primary and secondary educational systems in Oklahoma, and the many citizens of the state who take an interest in its history and politics.

Primary among the goals of the Center is the education of OU students, both graduates and undergraduates. At the graduate level the Center admits two students each year into the Ph.D. program of the Department of Political Science as Carl Albert Fellows. Carl Albert Fellows are recruited nationwide on a competitive basis. Each fellow is given a five-year package of financial support that includes three years on a re-

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search and/or teaching assistantship, a one-year congressional fellowship spent in Washington, D.C., working on Capitol Hill, and a dissertation year fellowship.

While at OU, the fellows must complete a four-course sequence on the Congress, in addition to satisfying all other requirements for the Ph.D. degree in political science. Besides the degree itself, each Carl Albert Fellow leaves the program with experience in teaching, research, and work in the government. Carl Albert Fellows are expected to pursue careers in teaching or public service.

At the undergraduate level, the Center sponsors a congressional studies area concentration. This concentration is designed to allow any

undergraduate student, no matter what his or her major may be, to enroll in a series of three courses on the Congress, and to write a research paper on a related topic. Students enrolled in the congressional studies area concentration also participate in the Center's various activities. The Center cooperates with the Cortez A. M. Ewing Foundation in sponsoring the Ewing Fellowship Program which each summer places five outstanding OU undergraduates in congressional offices as interns.

The principal objective of these academic programs is the instruction of students in the ways of American democracy. An important related objective is to develop the student's capacities for critical analysis and inquiry. In this respect, the Congressional Archive serves as an important supplement to the academic program, giving students an opportunity to conduct research that exposes them to the nuts and bolts of the legislative process.

The archive is useful to others as well, of course. One of the Center's main goals is to encourage the use of its research facilities. Toward this end the Center is planning to sponsor a Visiting Scholars Program to bring scholars from around the country to the Center to conduct their research. In addition to the archive, these scholars also will have access to a major research collection on the Congress which is now being assembled. This research collection will include monographic literature on the Congress, journals, magazines and newspapers, public documents and other materials.

Among the primary users of the archive will be the Center's academic staff, presently three full-time political scientists, each engaged in research on the Congress. As the director of the Center, I am researching a major book on the office of the Speaker of the United States House of Representatives, drawing on Speaker Albert's papers. Professor Tom Wander, the Center's assistant director, is exploring the congressional budget process, and Professor Gary Copeland is studying the effects of campaign financing on congressional elections.

The academic programs and re-

search projects outlined above form the core of the Center's programs. However, they are, by and large, internal in their focus. In its quest to gain national recognition, the Center also is reaching out to the national academic and governmental communities. Among the Center's outreach programs will be an annual conference, a distinguished lectureship and a nationally distributed journal. Each of these programs will involve interaction among the faculty and students at the Center, and prominent scholars, members and former members of Congress, and distinguished journalists and commentators from around the country.

An annual Congressional Conference, each organized around a particular theme, will bring together persons who have expertise in a specific area of congressional studies. A small number of scholarly papers will be commissioned to provide a focus for discussion. Such a conference is designed to provide a learning experience for the Center's staff and students but also to provide an opportunity for other scholars and public officials to reflect upon some of the important issues of the day. By staging the conference in Norman, the Center hopes to bring the University community and the Washington community into closer contact. Conference papers and proceedings will be published in the Center's journal.

One of the most important annual events being planned for the Center is its Distinguished Lectureship, a major statement on the viability of representative democracy in the United States by scholars and public officials of national prominence. Each lectureship will involve a series of three public lectures delivered on the Norman campus over a period of one week. The lectureships, arranged at least one year in advance to allow adequate time for preparation, in time should become a nationally noted event, unique in theme and scope.

Development of the Congressional Archive, both in terms of acquisitions and of use, is essential to the future of the Carl Albert Center. The Center continually is seeking additional congressional papers, particularly those of non-Oklahomans, in order to

broaden the scope of the archive. But each collection must be processed meticulously to preserve the papers and to make them usable by scholars. The Center must accelerate the processing of collections already on hand and of others as they are acquired.

The Congressional Archive represents a valuable asset for all the people of Oklahoma, an asset which the Center plans to make available to as many Oklahomans as possible. Slide presentations and exhibits are being

developed, with accompanying educational materials, for use in the junior highs, mid-highs and high schools of the state.

Of course, the archive's greatest value is to scholars. Currently, several scholars each month are given access to the archive. A scholar's interest in coming to the Carl Albert Center may run the gamut from ascertaining a single question of fact to engaging in a major research project.

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The National Advisory Board

In addition to its staff, the Carl Albert Congressional Research and Studies Center has the advice and support of a distinguished National Advisory Board. The members of the board, each serving three-year terms, visit the Norman campus annually to review the Center's curriculum, archive, and programs. Composed of distinguished members and former members of Congress, historians, political scientists and friends of the University, the board serves an invaluable function in guiding the Center's development. By lending the prestige of their names to the Center, the members of the National Advisory Board contribute to the recognition of the Center nationwide. Currently serving as members of the National Advisory Board are:

Richard A. Baker, U.S. Senate Historian

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James C. Wright, Jr., Majority Leader, U.S. House of Representatives, Texas

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Among the more notable research efforts produced through the use of the archive is Ann Hodges Morgan's recent biography of Senator Robert S. Kerr (*Robert S. Kerr: The Senate Years*, University of Oklahoma Press). A scholar from the west coast currently is researching a major biography of Helen Gahagan Douglas.

To realize all of its objectives, the Carl Albert Center is kicking off a national endowment campaign. The drive will be inaugurated this spring with a dinner in honor of Speaker Albert in Oklahoma City. The dinner will feature many of Speaker Albert's former colleagues in the House and Senate, including the present Speaker of the House, Thomas P. "Tip" O'Neill, Jr., of Massachusetts.

The Center is seeking private contributions to the endowment to supplement support being sought from the federal government. Legislation for a special appropriation, sponsored by the entire Oklahoma delegation to the Congress, was submitted in the 96th Congress and is being resubmit-

ted in the 97th Congress. Enactment of this legislation would provide up to \$3 million in federal matching funds for all private and public contributions to the Center's endowment.

The State Legislature has already passed two special appropriations — \$100,000 in 1977 to process the Albert papers and \$200,000 in 1979 to establish the Carl Albert Center. The state regents have designated the Center an OU "special program" to receive state funding as a regular part of the University budget. The Center's endowment drive forms an important part of the University's \$103 million Campaign for Academic Excellence.

The Carl Albert Center is a unique forum for scholarship and instruction. In addition to the recognition it brings to the University and the state of Oklahoma, the Center serves as a model of academic innovation. But most importantly, the Center provides an environment in which students and faculty alike are encouraged to engage in critical reflection

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Eleanor Roosevelt, left, Melvyn and Helen Gahagan Douglas visit a Farm Security Administration Camp in '41.

on basic questions of American democracy. In fulfilling this aspect of its mission, the Carl Albert Center has impact not only on this generation of students, but upon generations to come.

Photos courtesy of the Congressional Archive, OU Western History Collections.

It's Not So Long Ago

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mathematics; Joseph F. Paxton, the Greek and Latin professor; and Vernon L. Parrington, the Harvard-educated founder of the University's department of English.

Perhaps the man who made the greatest impression of all on young Long was President Boyd himself, who is remembered with a list of adjectives: "a fine, Christian man, far-sighted, resourceful, friendly, fair, cultured."

The trees that Boyd planted and nursed on the north oval through a drought in 1893 were thriving by the time Long arrived at OU. "He started the planting and carried the water himself to keep the trees growing," an awed Long said.

When Long received his geology degree in 1905, he was one of eight students awarded bachelor's degrees that year. Two others received master's degrees, and another 15

earned pharmaceutical chemist degrees.

During that year — two years before Oklahoma became a state — about 450 students were enrolled, and more than half of that number were students in the preparatory school. Today, in its 90th year, OU enrolls nearly 22,000 students at its Norman campus.

When Long enrolled at OU, only one brick structure stood on the otherwise barren campus; that was the "first administration building" which burned to the ground in 1903. By 1904, two buildings that still stand on the north oval — the Carnegie Building and the Old Science Hall — had been constructed. Today, some 320 buildings stand on OU campuses in Norman, Oklahoma City and Tulsa.

Long's career took him far from Norman, to numerous missions and

schools in Brazil. With his wife, Lucy Mae, who died in 1970, Long served in the South American country from 1911 to 1952. He retired in 1956, but only officially. He continued to teach and lecture occasional classes, and became active in the OU Alumni Association as well.

Long has lived at the Methodist Manor Home in Tulsa since 1974, but he has traveled to Norman as recently as May 1980, where, as he recounts proudly, OU President William S. Banowsky led a gathering of alumni in a standing ovation for the retired minister. He was honored again in December when he was named the 1,500th member of the OU Associates thanks to an anonymous contribution made by a donor in Long's name.

Just as alumni at OU have taken great pride in Long's dedication to the University through the years, so Long has maintained his deep pride in OU. "I love my alma mater and the state to which it belongs," he said.