
PROLOGUE

After We've Said Goodbye



The initial reaction when a university president resigns is to assume that forever after, "things" will be different. When the president happens to be the hard-charging, charismatic Bill Banowsky, whose advent on the Oklahoma scene nearly four years ago was just short of phenomenal, the tendency to retrench is almost automatic. But this reaction is largely external; internally, where changes of mantle are not so disturbing, the order of the day is business as usual. The more things change at the University of Oklahoma, the more they stay the same.

The University of Oklahoma is not — and never has been — one person. David Ross Boyd literally built the institution from the ground up; yet his departure, while lamentable, was survivable. The same has been true for each of his successors. The University was not George L. Cross even after 25 years as president, and it is not William S. Banowsky after four.

This is not to say that Banowsky's record at OU and his enormous contributions to its development will not be remembered for a very long time. Bill Banowsky has earned his place beside the movers of this institution, those who built big and dreamed bigger. He took a university stabilized by the diligent service of President Paul F. Sharp and used his own talents to achieve spectacular results. He raised our sights, sharpened our vision, applied his creative touch to projects long stalemated. Then he left to his successor the task of solidifying these

gains into a steady progression toward the excellence which all OU presidents have pursued.

Banowsky had a magnetic effect on outside support, both public and private. The University needs that solid support most of all during the next few months. There will be some falling away, but not among those with a genuine concern for the institution. The few whose interest was based solely on the person of the president were not aboard for the long haul anyway.

The feeling may linger that in some way Bill Banowsky has let us down, that we had everything going for us, and he bailed out. There's a sense of disappointment that he would prefer a chamber of commerce to a university. Oklahomans made him larger than life, but his life here wasn't quite large enough.

We have a hard time believing that the man was bored, that he had done everything he really wanted to do in Oklahoma. Yet from the day he arrived in Norman, his closest colleagues knew that he was on a tight schedule. He performed wonders in a short period of time; if he had been able to make a career commitment to the job, there is no limit to what he might have accomplished.

The University of Oklahoma will miss the sense of excitement which surrounded its tenth president, the expectation that each day would present some new challenge. But in the last analysis, each person must do what he feels is best for him. It was time for Bill Banowsky to move on.

— CAROL J. BURR

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