

## Proper Time, Proper Place to Set the Record Straight



**G**eorge Lynn Cross is one of the most honored individuals in the history of the University of Oklahoma — and justly so. His 25 years as president saw the transformation of the institution from a provincial four-year college striving for academic maturity into a bona fide modern university with a legitimate claim to educational respectability.

When Cross retired in 1968, there was a remarkable outpouring of tangible tributes to his leadership. Besides the testimonial banquets and the special dedications, his name was attached to buildings, professorships, awards, streets, even a local private school. While appreciative of all the homage paid him, Cross always has been troubled by the lack of recognition accorded over the years to his predecessor, Joseph A. Brandt.

A major portion of Cross' efforts since 1968 has been devoted to chronicling the University's history. In two of his four books already published by the University of Oklahoma Press (a fifth is scheduled for this fall and a sixth is nearing completion), he deals extensively with events of the Brandt era. But Cross feels that Brandt's accomplishments deserve more.

*Sooner Magazine* is the appropriate vehicle for Cross' retrospective on Brandt, "The Test of Time" on Page 4. *Sooner Magazine* was a Joe Brandt creation, his first project upon joining the University staff in 1928, and he remained its editor for 5 years.

Likewise, no one is better qualified to render judgment on the Brandt

administration than George Cross; he was a part of it, as well as its chief beneficiary. Yet even Cross' evaluation of Brandt required mature reflection. When Brandt instituted his whirlwind reorganization, Cross was among the victims — or so it seemed at the time. "I was mad at Joe Brandt," Cross admits. "I woke one morning to discover that I was no longer head of the botany department."

Cross had no way of knowing, of course, that he was destined to be Brandt's successor or that Brandt would leave him the most valuable gift a new president can receive — a clean slate with the painful reform process and its accompanying blood-letting already accomplished.

But if Cross feels indebted to Brandt, Brandt should harbor similar feelings toward Cross. The Brandt legacy has endured because Cross had the strength, ability and perseverance to make Brandt's visionary plan work in practice as well as theory. Had someone else succeeded to the presidency, the story might have had a much different ending.

Although the reaction was mixed when Brandt announced his resignation with a typically blunt attack on the inadequacy of OU's legislative appropriations, the feeling was universal that finding his successor would not be easy. Governor Robert S. Kerr blandly suggested that the next president should possess President Bizzell's experience and scholarly attainments, the energy and administrative ability of President Brooks, and preferably an Oklahoma back-

ground, experience and education.

The *Chickasha Express* was dubious that such a man existed, agreeing with the *Norman Transcript* that "several members of the University faculty have the ability to become college or university presidents, but so many cross currents have developed on the campus in the last few years that it is doubtful if any faculty member could command the united support of the group."

The *Norman Transcript* was generally complimentary but cautious. "The fate of the University College, the rotating plan for departmental chairmanships, the Faculty Senate, which succeeded the administrative council composed of deans, is uncertain. All of these changes aroused considerable opposition within the faculty, and some members of the board of regents still look upon them as experimental. If the next president's ideas and beliefs coincide with those of Mr. Brandt, no doubt most of the present policies and practices will continue, but one with a different philosophy about educational matters could erase many of Mr. Brandt's marks on the University sands of time."

The *Bartlesville Examiner* also was willing to reserve the final judgment for posterity. "Brandt will leave his mark on the institution, as have those who preceded him. It is a good mark. How much Brandt has done in so short a time will be known when there is time for a better perspective."

George Cross believes that ample time has passed, and the better perspective is long overdue.

—CAROL J. BURR