

# Banowsky Takes Broadcasting Post

**S**ooner Magazine readers within the reach of the Oklahoma press know by now that — for the second time in a little more than two years — the University of Oklahoma is searching for a presidential successor to William S. Banowsky. This time, however, there will be no reprieve. Banowsky will not change his mind as he did in the fall of 1982, when he rescinded his resignation to return to his old job after a six-week hiatus, correcting what he called the “worst decision of my life.” On February 1, 1985, he left his Evans Hall office for the last time to become president and chief executive officer of Gaylord Broadcasting Company, a wholly owned subsidiary of the Oklahoma Publishing Company.

On the occasion of his previous resignation — to become the president of the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce — the Fall 1982 issue of *Sooner Magazine* carried an extensive farewell and tribute to the extraordinary accomplishments of the University's 10th president. They are worthy of review. Banowsky's first four years at OU were probably the most productive the institution had ever known. He came to Oklahoma just as the state's era of greatest prosperity was beginning, and he made the most of the opportunity.

During that period of time, OU's total share of the state's higher education appropriations increased 69 percent and faculty salaries, 45 percent. He added 119 faculty positions and nine endowed chairs and named professorships. He went after private gifts of all sizes, from the \$100-a-year President's Partners and \$1,000-a-year University of Oklahoma Associates to multimillion-dollar endowments. Private giving to the University increased 85 percent.

He completed old projects and started new ones, a total of \$125 million in construction, including the Huston Huffman Physical Fitness Center, the

South End Zone Stadium expansion, the Doris W. Neustadt Wing of Bizzell Memorial Library, the Viersen Gymnastics Facility, the L. Dale Mitchell Baseball Park, the Henry D. and Ida Mosier College of Pharmacy Building and the Energy Center.

Banowsky knew before he returned from California to take up his old job again that the economic boom was over. The state was in trouble and with it, of course, the University. Over the next two-and-a-half years, he saw state revenues coming to the University cut \$12 million; salaries were frozen; vacancies occurred and could not be filled. But he refused to abandon the Energy Center and got the new School of Music building under way. With OU supporters in the oil and gas industry fighting for their lives, private giving dropped from \$18.85 million to \$16 million, then amazingly rebounded to \$18 million.

But finally, Bill Banowsky's career at the University ran its course. He turned down several attractive opportunities during the last year before one came along that he couldn't afford to refuse. There was little the Univer-

sity could do but extend best wishes to Banowsky as he took up his duties with Gaylord Broadcasting, and he and wife Gay moved their home to Dallas.

If his 1982 career move seemed a strange choice, this decision seems exactly right for the charismatic Banowsky. His educational background is in communications. He has had his own television program since his Pepperdine University days. In fact, he will continue his monthly “Bill Banowsky Visits” on KTVY Channel 4 in Oklahoma City even after his move to Dallas. He served on the board of directors for public television systems in both California and Oklahoma and recently was appointed by President Reagan to the board of the National Public Broadcasting System.

As the operational head of the nation's largest privately owned broadcasting company, Banowsky will be responsible for a TV/movie film production and distribution company in Los Angeles; Opryland, U.S.A., in Nashville, including the theme park, Opryland Hotel, the Grand Ole Opry production company and cable TV's fast-growing new Nashville Network; and five radio and seven television stations. When the FCC decides to increase the number of television stations a company may own, Gaylord Broadcasting is certain to add more. Meanwhile, Banowsky already has announced the successful acquisition of one-third of the Texas Rangers baseball team, along with TV rights to its games, with an option to buy the rest of the team as it becomes available.

There is no doubt that Banowsky will make a lot of money in his new job. He will have a prominent position in an industry which always has fascinated him — and perhaps most important of all, he will be facing a new challenge. Banowsky prefers to plough new ground, not retill the old.



President William S. Banowsky announces his resignation.

— CJB