
PROLOGUE

If History Repeats, OU's Next President Should Pack for a Long Stay

HELP WANTED:

Chief executive for \$339 million-a-year educational enterprise.

Must have impeccable academic credentials, high-level administrative experience and a thorough grounding in fiscal management and budgeting. Experience in private fund raising preferred. Candidates should possess a pleasing appearance; an outgoing personality; the wisdom of Solomon, the patience of Job and the repartee of Carson; and a willingness to attend banquets five-to-six nights a week with an insatiable appetite for chicken breast on rice and broccoli.

Personal skills should include a mastery of internal and external politics under the guise of being completely apolitical; a sympathetic understanding of Southwestern values, attitudes and mores; and an ability to bring together the divergent interests of 25,000 students on three campuses, 6,500 faculty and staff and seven regents, with consideration for the opinions of nine state regents and a chancellor, 149 state legislators, one governor, 140,000 alumni, thousands of parents, the press and a host of sports fanatics, both with and without tickets.

Salary negotiable; fringe benefits good. Cardiac and/or ulcer patients need not apply.

The University of Oklahoma has a job opening.

It's a pretty good job, in fact, historically the most prestigious in Oklahoma. Get this job and you're an instant celebrity; you get to travel and meet a lot of interesting people; you have good seats for every main event in the state; you get to live in a nice house and drive a nice car and work in a nice office. And best of all, your associates are fascinating folks, from the brightest faculty and students to an alumni list that includes the prime movers in business, industry, govern-

ment, the arts and entertainment.

All you have to do to keep this job is please almost all of the people almost all of the time. For Frank E. Horton, OU's 11th president, that price may have become too high to pay. This summer, to the surprise of most observers, Horton ended his three years in office by announcing his resignation. After a year's sabbatical, he will return to the classroom as a faculty member in the department of geography.

Horton was a popular figure on the campus. By and large, the faculty felt that he was a tireless worker for academic excellence, an overworked phrase that means upgrading the quality of both the faculty and the student body. He was determined to make the University of Oklahoma a respected research university in the mold of the American Association of Universities, a membership he sought for OU. He pursued academic alliances of international scope; he tried to forge partnerships with state businesses. He pushed for higher admission standards, a stronger core curriculum and increased state appropriations.

The students liked Horton. He liked to talk to students, and as president he made himself available to them — in his office, in his home or on public occasions. He appeared everywhere, most often with his wife Nancy, and there was nothing stiff or formal about the Hortons.

Unfortunately, Horton could not have chosen a worse time to begin his presidency. Three years ago, Oklahomans were in a really bad mood. "Economic slump" doesn't adequately describe the condition he found here. And there were unresolved questions between the administration and the board of regents on their respective responsibilities in running the institution. The economy improved; the regental relationship didn't.

The good news is that as the search

for Horton's successor proceeds the University is in very capable hands. Interim President David Swank, a veteran of 25 years as OU legal counsel, professor and most recently dean of the College of Law, is experienced as both advocate and negotiator. Most importantly, he cares deeply about the University and will keep its programs moving until a permanent occupant for the president's office signs on, hopefully to see the institution into the 21st century.

The wonderful thing about universities is that they survive. Good men and women come and go, but the institution remains. When David Ross Boyd was wavering about accepting the presidency of a university with as yet no buildings, no faculty and no student body, a friend advised him to go for it. "Oklahoma Territory will become a state sooner or later," Boyd recalled his friend saying, "and no state university has ever failed."

Of course when statehood came 16 years later, Boyd did not survive, swept away by the governmental shift from Republican to Democrat—which brings up an interesting sidelight on presidential longevity, for those who believe in historical repetition:

D. R. Boyd (1892-1908)	— 16 years
A. G. Evans (1908-11)	— 3 years
S. D. Brooks (1912-23)	— 11 years
J. S. Buchanan (1923-25)	— 3 years
W. B. Bizzell (1925-41)	— 16 years
J. A. Brandt (1941-43)	— 3 years
G. L. Cross (1943-68)	— 25 years
J. H. Hollomon (1968-70)	— 3 years
P. F. Sharp (1971-78)	— 7 years
W. S. Banowsky (1978-85)	— 7 years
F. E. Horton (1985-88)	— 3 years

If statistically we could lump the Sharp/Banowsky years together (to which they both would object), the conclusion would be unmistakable. The University of Oklahoma's 12th president should be in for a nice, long stay.

—CJB