



The Kingfish at OU

It is common practice among colleges and universities to claim as an alumnus every tuition-paying student who ever stood in an admissions line, especially if that student subsequently goes on to a place of prominence—and even a touch of notoriety doesn't hurt. Such was the case in 1929 when the first *Sooner Magazine* editor, Joseph A. Brandt, was soliciting alumni articles for his fledgling publication. Imagine the former newspaperman's excitement when he discovered that the colorful and controversial new governor of Louisiana had once — however briefly — been a Sooner.

Brandt wrote to Governor Huey P. Long asking for some career achievements and student reminiscences for the magazine. "The Kingfish" graciously replied, but by the time Brandt's article appeared in May 1929, impeachment charges instigated by the political machine, the New Orleans Ring, had been brought against Long by the Louisiana House of Representatives. He was later acquitted by the Louisiana Senate.

A penniless farm boy whose college education consisted of a semester at the OU law school in 1912 and a similar brief stay at Tulane University, Long founded a political dynasty in Louisiana based on social reforms to benefit

poor farmers and workers. In 1930, he was elected to the U.S. Senate but for two years refused to leave the governor's office until a hand-picked successor was elected to carry out his program, using the slogan "Every Man a King."

Long split with President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal and formed the Share-the-Wealth Society, which among other things sought a guaranteed annual family income. He challenged Roosevelt for the Democratic presidential nomination in 1935 but was shot on September 8 by a bitter political enemy and died two days later.

The Long family carried on. A younger brother, Earl, served three terms as governor of Louisiana and was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives, as was an older brother, George. The Kingfish's son, Russell, first was elected to the U.S. Senate in 1948 and became one of its most powerful members.

Huey Long's letter to Joe Brandt, who later became president of the University of Oklahoma, resurfaced last year when the Brandt papers were given by his family to the OU archives. The letter is reproduced here, a "Sooner Memory" complete with type-overs and smudges, leading to the supposition that Long either had a very inept secretary or typed the reply himself.

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