

A Former President Speaks

Dr. Joseph Brandt takes typewriter in hand to give alumni a glimpse of his administration and of the motives and men who served with him.

By Joseph A. Brandt, '21ba

Editor's Note: In the May issue of Sooner Magazine, a series of articles by Dr. Roy Gittinger, '02 ba, regents professor of history was completed. This particular issue spotlighted the class of 1944. In telling the background information of the period from 1939 to 1944, Dr. Gittinger, tells the story of the administration of former University President Joseph A. Brandt, '21ba. Dr. Brandt, who is now pioneer chairman of the first Graduate Department of Journalism at UCLA, read the story concerning his tenure of office and asked Sooner Magazine to "save him a little space" so that he might have a chance to correct "some inaccuracies and several misstatements."

We are herewith offering Dr. Brandt's report. For a completely fair comparison and discussion of the two stories, may we urge you to read Dr. Gittinger's story on page 20 in the May, 1950 Sooner along with Dr. Brandt's article.—D. B.

Ever since I resigned the presidency of the University of Oklahoma, I have refrained from making any defense or explanation or correction when unfair or unwarranted attacks have been made upon my administration. My conscience has been perfectly clear about my two and a half years in office. I know that I carried out the program which the members of the Board of Regents wanted me to put into force. I am proud of the fact that every single major reform I introduced at Oklahoma was approved in each instance by a unanimous vote of the members of the Board, and these reforms included my establishment of the Research Professorships on my last day in office.

Anyone at all familiar with the stormy history of higher education in Oklahoma must realize, therefore, that my administration, taken as a whole, represented a plan of action with which the Board was in general agreement before I assumed the office of President, and did not represent capricious or arbitrary brainstorms of a headline seeker.

When, for the third time in the course of a year I had refused to let my name be considered for the presidency, I was asked to submit an outline of needed reforms for the University, I did so, thinking of course that they represented such a radical departure that I had effectually discouraged the Board from any further consideration of me. To my consternation, my suggestions had quite the opposite effect and I was subjected to such pressure, not only from members of the Board but also from leading citizens of Oklahoma, that I finally yielded.

I know that as president my aims were always only for the betterment of the University and to bring it on an educational level with other leading universities. I worked hard and loyally and I did my best. Any mistakes I made were no worse than other men in the same position have made—no one is perfect, and no president at the University of Oklahoma has ever pleased all people at the same time. My administration was a stormy one because uprooting and spading is always a turbulent task and that is what the Regents wanted and what I felt the school needed. Because I changed the status quo, I made many enemies, but I know in my heart that the steps the Regents and I took

were the right ones, and your present President has told me that his task would have been an impossible one but for the unpleasant spade work done during my administration.

So I do not write this in defense. I have no apology to make. The time has come when I am impelled to clarify some aspects of my administration, because Dean Gittinger, whom I have always admired and respected as a truthful, conscientious and fair-minded person, has made several incorrect statements in his radio speech which was reprinted in the May issue of *Sooner Magazine*. I am confident that with his sense of rectitude he would be the first to welcome these corrections and grant me the right to state my case.

For the sake of brevity I shall confine myself to those avenues to which his provocative radio address gave a green light—but in doing so, I find it necessary to paint a historical background. A small group of people has frequently implied that I was not as loyal to President Bizzell as he was to me. Nothing could be further from the truth. One of the richest memories of my life was the ten years I spent as director of the University of Oklahoma Press. Two things were perhaps as dear to President Bizzell's heart as anything could be—the Press and the Library. During the formative years of the Press and when I was editor of *The Sooner Magazine*, I saw the President at least two or three times a week. No matter how busy he was, he would always take time out to talk about books and about the future.

During these interviews, he always talked freely about his own hopes for the University. . . . I was very happy indeed when the senior class during my administration voted to have as its class gift to the University a statue of President Bizzell but I was dumbfounded when the president of the class interpreted my suggestion that the statue be placed in front of the library as a slight to Dr. Bizzell. I knew what the library meant to him and I felt it would be tragic not to place the statue there. The president of the senior class thought of the south oval as the back door—but President Bizzell, as a true educator, knew that the Library was the front door to learning.

While the President was unswerving in his loyalty to the Press and to me, not all of his administration was, as Dean Gittinger says. On three separate occasions, without the President's knowledge, members of his staff tried to destroy the Press. I had the loyalty and support and confidence of a small group of productive scholars who saw what Dr. Bizzell did in the Press—a realization of research and a truly great contribution to the cultural wealth of the state. Without those enthusiastic professors who entrusted their manuscripts to a young Press which had up to then not existed and without Dr. Bizzell's unqualified support, the work I did would never have produced a University Press. Even when John Joseph Mathews' *Wah'kon-Tah* became the first Book-of-the-Month, men on the administrative staff tried to destroy the Press, and only when I invited these critics to a show-down before the President and found that this was the last thing they wanted, did I realize

that they were acting without the President's knowledge.

The last time was after Paul B. Sears' *Deserts on the March* had attained a national success; this time, a committee without consulting me made a report to the President which, if adopted would have reduced the Press to a nonentity. When I received a mimeographed copy of the committee's report, approved by the President, I went in and resigned the directorship. The President was amazed. I asked him if he had read the committee's report. He said he had not but the chairman had told him its content. I said the committee wanted to destroy the Press that the President had so loyally supported and in which my colleagues and I had worked so hard. The President refused to accept my resignation and the night before going to the hospital to be treated for ulcers, I had it out, at the President's request, with the committee. The result was that the recommendations were withdrawn and the Press was saved.

Not until an Eastern university recognized the worth of the Press by offering me a directorship of its Press at more than twice my salary, which was \$3,120 a year when I left, did the state and campus really see what they had in the Press. It already had a national reputation when Savoie Lottinville (director of the Press) took over and Mr. Lottinville has taken that foundation and built one of the most outstanding university presses in the country, and through the Press, Oklahoma is known and respected throughout the scholarly world both in this country and abroad. This was what President Bizzell had dreamed of and it is a source of pride to me in having begun the Press and having kept it going against obstinate reaction, and it must be a similar source of pride to Mr. Lottinville, who worked so loyally for five years as business manager.

Dean Gittinger is quite correct when he says I had had no teaching experience, but that is no indication at all that I was not called upon to participate in administrative affairs. I was a professor both at Norman and at Princeton, and in that capacity I was called upon to perform the tasks usually assigned to that title. I was serving on seven committees when I left Norman in 1938. At Princeton I served on various administrative committees. Actually, the trend all over the country in recent years is away from making a teaching staff member president. My "flair for publicity" was not for personal gains—I hated the publicity part of the job.

As to the story Dean Gittinger tells about the 50th anniversary celebration, I cannot answer that one because this is the first time I have ever heard it, and to my knowledge there is not one word of truth in it. Before I went to Princeton I served on the centennial committee making plans for the celebration. It was to be a great occasion and should have been. However, I am not in any way personally responsible for the raid on Pearl Harbor and the curtailing of travel necessitated by the event of war, which is the only reason the centennial was not held as planned. I do not know what

magazine he refers to, nor do I know anything about a Tulsa newspaperman writing a story. This incident in which I had no part is obviously a creation of the mind of someone who wants to make a story. I gained no personal satisfaction from seeing my picture in any magazine or newspaper at any time.

I did make every effort to place the administration of university affairs in the hands of the general faculty and senate. I still feel that is where it should be placed and that the senate should assume such responsibility as it does on most campuses, rather than letting a handful of ambitious, selfish, ruthless men run the administration as had been done for years.

Many who now want to make it appear that they were in the vanguard of President Bizzell's supporters, by actual fact opposed him during his entire administration while giving him lip service. Dean Gittinger was not one of those men but I should have thought that he was close enough to the administrative affairs of the University to have known what had been going on all those years. Certainly the Regents knew. Certainly Dr. Bizzell knew and it caused him no end of embarrassment and harassments in carrying out his educational program.

And, for all time, I should like once more to explain the University College. I would have assumed here too that Dean Gittinger would have understood what this idea stood for. It is not so difficult a thing to understand and it is not a new idea. The same system is now in force in most of the better and larger universities of the country and was then in force at several of them. The idea did not come from the University of Chicago and has absolutely no relationship to the Chicago plan. Chicago, in the first place, is a private school where students are highly selective. The plan rests upon the idea that elementary school runs for six years, a highschool period for four, and then college for four years. Therefore, obviously, until the 6-4-4 plan is inaugurated in public schools, such a plan can never be adapted to public education. An A.B. degree is granted at Chicago at a period which in age would correspond to the end of the sophomore year in a routine school. It is granted after the student, who has completed grade school in six rather than eight years has actually had a complete four year college course.

Graduates with the Chicago A.B. are not accepted for graduate work in other institutions since the A.B. there is not recognized, but frequently those graduates are better prepared educationally than some graduates with a real A.B. This, however, is a case beside the point because most of the students at Chicago have better than average I.Q.'s and are not ever average students to begin with. So the Chicago system, in my opinion, has thus far not proven anything for public education.

I did propose a University College plan which would give two years of solid general education in the Liberal Arts. At no time did I propose a bastard degree for this work. I do feel that many students can get all the education they want or need in two years of general education, and I do feel that they should be given a certificate (not a degree) at the end of that time and they should be made to feel they have completed the type of education they want. For those who want to specialize, the last two years of college leave the way open, and they are better equipped to select their fields of study. This system is universally practiced in all the better universities of today. In some they refer to the lower and upper division—in some it is called this—in others that—but the basic idea is general education for two years before any specialization. Why the plan was so bitterly opposed at Oklahoma when it is generally accepted everywhere else is explainable, but, as President Cross is quoted in a recent

newsstory as saying in explanation of the differential between cost per student at A. and M. and at O.U., "I will explain it to anyone who cares to come to my office and hear it privately."

Once and for all I should like to explain that I never did ask everyone to call me Joe, and at no time did I ever suggest or imply or want students to call me Joe. I know how that story started. At my first meeting with the Legislature and the press some of my classmates and old friends were in attendance. At one point one of them directed a question to me and hesitated whether to say Doctor, President or Joe. He had always called me Joe before this. I was anxious for people to know that I did not intend to change my person and I wanted to make people feel that I regarded this job as a service to the state in which I was working for the betterment of the state just as the legislators were—we were colleagues it seemed to me on pretty much the same level so to put them at ease (and I really meant it and wanted it that way) I said, "Just call me Joe as you always have." That definitely did not imply that I wanted everyone to call me Joe. I did prefer being called Mr. Brandt to Dr. Brandt.

When Dean Gittinger states that I decided I did not want to be a university president he is putting it mildly. Before I came to the office I did not want to be a university president. I was happy in my work at Princeton and it was richly satisfying. Life for me and for my family was good. When the idea was first proposed to me I laughed it off and Mrs. Brandt was bitterly opposed to the idea being entertained at all. After repeated refusals to consider the proposal, the Regents finally asked me if I would agree, before I finally said no, to meet with them in Dallas at a secret meeting and they urged that Mrs. Brandt come with me. We spent a day with them discussing affairs of the University. The Regents suggested that if I would not come, I should propose what reforms I thought were needed. The more I outlined what needed to be done, the more determined they were that I should come and help institute those reforms.

It was after a terrible personal struggle and a feeling of great personal sacrifice that I ever agreed to undertake the office and leave happiness behind me at Princeton. I was made to feel by the Regents that by working with them I could better salaries for the faculty, and I felt that if I could bring about faculty self-government and reorganize the faculty so that they would have the power to establish educational policies of the University, it would be a contribution worth bringing about.

The same men who had opposed many of Dr. Bizzell's reforms opposed mine. The faculty wanted increased salaries but they did not want governmental responsibilities. With such an attitude my program seemed fruitless of realization. I had stated when I came that I did not consider the job for more than a five-year term and that if the budget were cut during that time I would leave. The budget was cut and I decided the time had come. In the meantime my homelife was rapidly disintegrating and my family life was suffering beyond all power to bear. The resignation was a great relief to me—in that Dean Gittinger was correct. Up to that time I had an abiding faith in people. I never suspected any one of a mean and selfish motive and I had always found that if I appealed to a man or a woman's better self I had his or her support and co-operation, and that basically everyone wanted to do the right thing and if you proved you had faith in him he would strive for the right thing. My faith in human beings was rapidly disappearing and it is a quality I did not want to lose. . . .

Before leaving Princeton to assume the presidency I was impressed by the need of harnessing the University's research to creating new capital wealth and thus further employment in the state. I had worked out in considerable detail plans for the University of Oklahoma Research Institute, but discovered that Dean Homer L. Dodge, with the approval of President Bizzell, was also working on a similar plan. Since our objectives were the same, we coalesced our plans and the Institute became a

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A Band Wasn't Necessary

Charles E. Engleman, '33ba, and J. Leland Gourley, '40, have decided that there is no day in June so "rare" that it is absent of Oklahoma hospitality.

Engleman, publisher of the *Clinton Daily News*, and Gourley, publisher of the *Henryetta Daily Free-Lance*, recently left Henryetta for Sallisaw by bus, there to board a train for New Orleans from which point they were to leave for a Caribbean naval reserve cruise. Before beginning the trip they sent a wire to Wheeler Mayo, publisher of the *Sequoyah County Times* at Sallisaw. Although the wire stated: "Headed for Sallisaw. Brass band to greet us will not be necessary," Mayo alleged that the "not" was omitted in the copy of the telegram which he received.

In any case, when Engleman and Gourley arrived at Sallisaw, they were taken into custody by an undersheriff and two deputies, who explained, "We're looking for a couple of hot-check artists."

With only a few minutes until train time, Mayo appeared with a four-piece brass band. He had caused the incident to allow himself time to round up the band to welcome the editors, he asserted. In due respect to the honored guests, he gave the two publishers keys to the city, then held a parade as they hurried to the railroad station barely in time to make the train. The scene was pictured in two front-page photos of the *Sallisaw Democrat-American*.

Later, on board the USS Sperry in the Caribbean, Gourley continued to write his newspaper column. He insisted that a brass band had greeted him and Engleman at New Orleans, also, but admitted it was actually a "cleanup week" parade which happened to be passing the station.

On the Sooner Scene . . .

years for Friday night, October 13, before the O.U.—Texas Game in Dallas.

Alumni meetings were planned or held in Boston, Amarillo and Denver—travelled on alumni business to such Oklahoma towns as Chickasha, Duncan, Enid, Ardmore, Pauls Valley, Tulsa, Wewoka, Seminole and Oklahoma City.

The SOONER MAGAZINE came out as usual and on time.

Numerous meetings were held with the staff and others on plans for 1950-51. Voted twice.

Your alumni headquarters is a busy and fascinating place. Whenever you are on the campus, come by and see us. We are always glad to see a Sooner.

Roll Call . . .

where Amdall is a student at the University school of medicine.

Sy Ramsey, '50journal, Cleveland, Ohio, has become a reporter for the *El Reno Daily Tribune*. While attending the University, he was a staff writer for the *Oklahoma Daily*.

Frank Costanza, '50pharm, and Mrs. Costanza are living in Weehawken, New Jersey, where he recently secured a position.

Alvin Boyd, '50Law, Tipton, was recently appointed assistant county attorney of Tillman County.

John Westervelt, '50eng, secured a military leave of absence from Southwestern Bell Telephone Co., where he is employed in Oklahoma City, for a tour of duty as ensign in the United States Navy for the summer. He was assigned to an electronics school at Treasure Island, San Francisco. While attending the University, Westervelt received the bronze Letzeiser award, the Tom Boyd award, was named to *Who's Who Among Students in American Universities and Colleges*, served as president of Alpha Tau Omega, was a student executive officer in the naval R.O.T.C. and was a member of the Student Senate.

CONOVER-AMBROSE: Miss Louanne Conover, Oklahoma City, became the bride of Thomas Nathaniel Ambrose, Jr., '50geol, in an evening ceremony June 22 in Crown Heights Christian Church, Oklahoma City. While attending the University, Ambrose was a member of Pick and Hammer Club and Alpha Tau Omega fraternity. After a ten-week European trip, the couple will make their home in New Brunswick, New Jersey, where Ambrose will enter Rutgers College to study for a master's degree in geology.

Frank E. Garner, '50ba, has accepted a position as teacher of English and psychology and as guidance counselor in the Ardmore high school for the coming school year.

ALLEY-DUGGIN: Miss June Alley, Woodward, became the bride of Thomas A. Duggin, '50ba, Woodward, on June 11 in the First Presbyterian Church, Oklahoma City. The couple is making their home in Midwest City. Affiliated with Sigma Epsilon fraternity, Duggin will return to the University this fall to begin graduate work.

SOTER-GALANIS: Kay Soter, '50ba, Oklahoma City, became the bride of Jerry Mike Galanis, Fon du Lac, Wisconsin, Sunday afternoon, June 25, in the Hellenic Orthodox Church in Oklahoma City. At the University, Mrs. Galanis was a member of Las Dos Americas Club. The couple is making their home in Fon du Lac.

BOECHER-JAMESON: Miss Carol Boecher, Kingfisher, and William Madison Jameson, '50journal, Norman, were united in marriage Friday, June 9, in the First Christian Church, Kingfisher. Jameson was commissioned an ensign in the United States Navy in June and was assigned to a

ship for active duty. The couple will make their home in Long Beach, California.

L. D. New, '50journal, and Mrs. June Sager, '50journal, have been named Oklahoma and Texas editors, respectively, of the *Texoman*, weekly publication devoted to Lake Texoma. Now the official publication of the Lake Texoma Sportsman Club, the *Texoman* maintains offices in both Madill and Denison, Texas.

Robert C. Kumler, '50journal, has been appointed editor of the *Carrier Courier*, semimonthly publication for carriers issued by the Oklahoma Publishing Co. While attending the University Kumler was editor of the *Covered Wagon*, campus humor magazine.

Brandt . . .

reality. Just as President Bizzell had stood for an adequate appropriation for the library building, so I in turn made sacrifices in the building program to insure an adequate appropriation for the Institute. This was made by the Legislature but the war prevented the construction of the building until after I had left the campus.

As one who had lived under very adverse circumstances during by first years at the University, I was determined that whatever else I accomplished, I would not leave the campus without laying an adequate for dormitories. This had also been a cherished ambition of President Bizzell but I had the fortune that townspeople, who had consistently blocked dormitory plans, were sated with naval personnel. With the splendid aid of such men as Capt. John F. Donelson, Dean Arthur B. Adams, Walter Kraft, Savoie Lottinville, we secured a real beginning which I am happy to see President Cross carrying forward so magnificently.

It had been my aim to have all freshmen housed in dormitories, under a house plan, by which they would receive tutorial help in learning study habits. Several such houses were instituted, like Franklin House, but of course, the changing character of the student body as a result of the war caused the program to be abandoned. I hope some day the plan

will be revived. The mortality among freshmen students is entirely too high and many of them can be saved under such a system.

Both President Brooks and President Bizzell had a clear idea of what the *University* (i.e., a center of research) of Oklahoma should be. President Brooks had to content himself with pioneering. President Bizzell in his inaugural called on the faculty to reach out toward the real University and his constant aim was toward that end. Yet, when he tried early in his administration to divide the undergraduate program into a lower and an upper division level, as had recently been done at the University of Illinois, he found adamant resistance in the administrative council, he told me. It was because of his experience that I was summary in the way in which the University College was introduced.

On the larger scope, however, because of the work already done, I was able to give increasing rewards for research, such as the Research professorships. I'm delighted that this plan has been extended to the great teachers of the University as well; too often we worship research to the exclusion of the good teacher whose role is moulding fine minds among undergraduates. President Cross, a wonderful teacher as well as scholar, is crystallizing the dreams and ambitions of his predecessors and adding to them his own rich contributions.

This is as it should be. A university is basically a conservative institution. Had I planned to spend the rest of my life as the president of the University, I would have sharply altered the tempo of reforms. On the other hand, had I done so, the danger would have been that most reforms would have been compromised into non-existence. My motives were through those of a loyal and devoted graduate to the University of Oklahoma who was impatient that the University take its rightful place with sister universities as a leader in education, an ambition not unique with me but one that had been shared by my two immediate predecessors. Perhaps I would have made no comment at all had not an able historian ascribed motives to me which I alone could know.

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