

IN MEMORIAM

JOHN ALTON BURDINE

John Alton Burdine died suddenly on September 15, 1967. He was born in Smithville, Mississippi on February 9, 1905. His family moved to Paris, Texas in his youth and he graduated from the Paris High School in 1921. He married Manon Griffith of Austin on December 23, 1931, and is survived by his wife, their son, Dr. John A. Burdine, Jr., and three grandchildren.

Alton Burdine came to the University of Texas as a freshman in 1921, and except for four years lived the remainder of his life in the University community. With one year away from the University for public school teaching, he completed requirements for the B.A. degree in June 1926 and the M.A. degree in August 1926. Immediately he became a full-time teacher in the Department of Government with the title of Tutor in 1926-27, and Instructor in 1927-29. In 1929-30 and 1932-33 he was a graduate student at Harvard University, from which he obtained the M.A. degree in 1930 and the Ph.D. in 1939. He was an instructor again at the University of Texas in 1930-31, then Adjunct Professor during 1931-32 and 1933-36, promoted to Associate Professor in 1936, and to Professor in 1939.

By 1939 at the age of 34 Burdine had completed the first phase in an extraordinary career. In addition to teaching, completion of a dissertation, and publication of several professional articles, he had been engaged in an amazingly diversified group of activities. In 1936 a committee of eleven assistant and associate professors (the "Burdine Committee") was elected by the faculty. As chairman of this committee on the Organization, Functions, and Future of the University, Burdine directed an exhaustive internal study of the University and piloted through the faculty significant changes in University organization and procedure. In addition, he was a regular consultant to the several agencies of Texas government which were embarking on new programs created by New Deal legislation, and was constantly active in the development of the organization and personnel programs of the Employment Commission and the Employment Service. He was also active in professional organizations in the field of political science and on committees of the National Municipal League and the National Civil Service Reform League.

In 1939 Burdine moved from teaching to administrative service. From October, 1939 to September, 1940 he was Administrative Consultant to the Administrator of the newly-created Federal Security Agency. Then, after one semester of teaching, he became on January 1, 1941 the first Vice-President of the University, from which position he resigned, in the tumult following President Homer Price Rainey's departure, in February, 1945. His resignation, called by him "his finest hour", was a matter of conscience; it brought him universal respect and enormous affection within the faculty.

For the next twelve years Burdine was again professor in the Department of Government. In his fields of state and local government, and personnel administration, he developed in his students the habits of thoroughness, attention to facts, and careful judgment that characterized his own scholarship and administrative service. In this period he stimulated students to an interest in public service and supervised a considerable number of dissertations and M.A. theses. While his own publications were not numerous, they invariably reflected his rigid standards of scholarship.

He readily reassumed professional responsibilities, serving as Chairman of the Program Committee of the American Political Science Association in 1946, and as a member of the Editorial Board of The Journal of Politics for many years. He assisted the U.S. Civil Service Commission in a variety of ways and was a member for several years of the Southern Regional Committee, Faculty Fellowship Program, of the Ford Foundation. While Vice-President he had been a member of the Board of Directors of the Community Chest of Austin, and in 1948-49 he was President of the Board of Directors of the Community Council. He was active on numerous committees of the Council. He served as Chairman of the Board of the University Methodist Church.

His most distinctive service during this period was, however, in the numerous special administrative activities in which he was engaged. He was regularly elected when eligible to the Faculty Council, the Graduate

Legislative Council, and the Committee on Academic Freedom and Responsibility, usually leading the poll of faculty votes. He was chairman of the committee on Academic Freedom and Responsibility, advisory committees on selection of a President in 1952 and 1960, the University Press Advisory Board, the committee that set up the University's parking and traffic system, the committee for coordination of student services, the Athletic Council, and President of the local chapters of Phi Beta Kappa and the AAUP. He was unofficial consultant to deans, president, and other executive officials.

In 1957 Burdine became Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, and was serving in this capacity at the time of his death. He had already accepted appointment as Associate Dean of the Graduate School, and for several years carried this additional responsibility, and also the chairmanship of the Vice-Chancellor's Excellence Fund. Service in these latter capacities enabled him to coordinate the Dean's office with the graduate and research programs of the University.


Burdine brought to the Dean's office prompt, fair and orderly administration. He gave his time unstintingly to the careful analysis of innovative ideas brought to him by others to evaluate their purposefulness and reasonableness in terms of the larger obligations of the University. In addition, his objectivity, deep knowledge of the University, and wisdom subjected him to enormous demands on his time for counsel to the faculty and other administrators on most of the major policy decisions of the University from 1957 to 1967.

Alton Burdine gave his life, as few men have, to the University of Texas. Whatever task was assigned to him, whether large or small, he performed it with diligence, dispatch, and attention to detail. In difficult times, when the campus was rent with dissension, Burdine's constructive guidance was sought by men in rival camps. Even though as Vice-President and Dean he had to deny many requests and mediate many disputes, probably no person ever questioned, or had reason to question, his fairness. Those who knew him well knew that his loyalty to The University was selfless. His humor could always ease a tense moment in group deliberations. He never came to a meeting without careful preparation and usually with a plan or policy. He preferred the quiet way of reason and calm judgment. He shunned publicity and public appearances, and filed secretly negative replies to numerous inquiries about his availability for university presidencies or other positions.

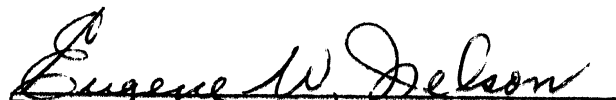
He had his honors. He was a member of Phi Beta Kappa, Phi Kappa Phi, Pi Sigma Alpha, Vice-President of the American Political Science Association, and was first included in Who's Who at the age of 37. Yet his greatest honor was the respect and confidence of his colleagues.

Many friends experienced the conviviality and joy of Alton's and Manon's companionship, but ill health in his last years required that rest at home and work at the University fill the successive days. In these last years, which Alton sensed would be few, he and his wife lived

quietly in devotion to each other and in pride of their son, daughter-in-law and grandchildren, and one may hope, also, of the service he had rendered to his students, his community, his government, and preeminently The University of Texas.



Norman Hackerman
President of the University of Texas at
Austin



Eugene W. Nelson
Secretary of the General Faculty

These Resolutions were prepared by a Special Committee consisting of Professors Emmette S. Redford, Chairman, William S. Livingston, H. Malcolm Macdonald and W. Gordon Whaley.

PUBLICATIONS

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- National-State Cooperation, With Special Reference to Texas (Arnold Foundation brochure, Southern Methodist University, 1935).
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- "Trends in Public Administration in the South," The Journal of Politics, Vol. X, pp. 419-441 (August, 1948).
- "Civil Service in Texas," Handbook of Texas, Vol. I, pp. 350-351, 1952.

Co-editor of bibliographical Section on "American Government and Politics," American Political Science Review, Vol. XLIV, pp. 1045-1049, Vol. XLV, pp. 243-247, 575-580, 909-913, 1213-1216, Vol. XLVI, pp. 254-257, 583-585, 900-902 (December, 1950 to September, 1952).

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