

IN MEMORIAM
ALEXANDER CASWELL ELLIS

In the death of Dr. A. Caswell Ellis, The University of Texas loses a much-beloved member of its faculty and Texas education one of its ablest exponents. He was born in Franklin County, North Carolina, May 4, 1871, and died in Austin, Texas on October 9, 1948. After receiving a Bachelor of Arts degree from North Carolina, he attended summer school at Harvard, and was awarded the degree of Doctor of Philosophy from Clark University under G. Stanley Hall in 1897. He studied at the University of Berlin in 1905-06,

Dr. Ellis came to The University of Texas as Adjunct Professor of Pedagogy in 1897, and, with Dr. W. S. Sutton, established the Department of Pedagogy out of which small beginning has grown the College of Education. In his early teaching, his interest lay in psychology, especially experimental psychology and child study. Later, philosophy of education claimed his major teaching and research interest, with psychology a close second. He established laboratory work in psychology in The University of Texas.

Two members of this committee remember with what enthusiasm and effectiveness he lectured in the years covering their student days in the first decade of the present century, and how he stimulated the experimental approach to the subject. Not only were his lectures inspiring, but the care exercised by him in giving and grading examination papers and in holding conferences with individual students in an effort to improve their understanding of the material was nothing short of phenomenal.

Dr. Ellis' interest in education extended far beyond his classroom performance. Indeed, it encompassed the economic and social aspects of society at large. He believed strongly in the efficacy of state legislation as a means of improving the educational and social life of his adopted state. He wrote many bills for the Texas legislature and promoted their introduction and passage. In his earnestness to get something done for the people, he was not deterred by those who criticized him and who sometimes openly opposed him and sought to "keep him in his place" as a

professor who should not bother about legislation. He was founder of the Parent-Teachers Association, an organization of wide influence and illustrious history in the field of public education in this country. Despite criticism, he worked constantly with women's organizations and other groups of the State in all manner of campaigns and legislative efforts to improve the economic, social, and especially the educational status of Texas. He cooperated with his colleague, Dr. Sutton, in organizing the Conference for Education in Texas, which organization did more than any other organization for a quarter of a century to improve public education in Texas.

He did research and wrote bulletins, articles and brochures on consolidation of schools, rural school building plans, better heating and lighting of school buildings, increased tax for schools, etc. He was active in promoting the establishment of the state school for the feebleminded. He was also active in the so-called "Hogg Organization" for the advancement of higher education in Texas.

His interest in agriculture and its teaching in the rural schools resulted in the passage of a law requiring the teaching of the subject of elementary agriculture in all rural schools. In 1912 he became joint author, with Dean E. J. Kyle of A. & M. College of Texas, of a text entitled "Fundamentals of Farming and Farm Life." He, along with V. W. Grubbs of Greenville, Texas, promoted for years, with final success, the establishment of the College of Industrial Arts, now the Texas State College for Women at Denton.

From 1897 to 1926 he was, successively, Adjunct Professor of Pedagogy, Associate Professor of Science and Art of Education, Professor of Philosophy of Education, and head of the Department of Psychology and Philosophy of Education in The University of Texas. During this period he wrote many articles and bulletins, one of which, "The Money Value of Education," was widely distributed by the U. S. Office of Education in this country and in foreign lands. No bulletin ever issued by the Federal Government in its field up to that time was so widely circulated.

In 1926 Dr. Ellis was invited by Western Reserve University, under the presidency of Dr. Robert E. Vinson, to become the Director of Cleveland College, the down town college of Western

Reserve. Under his leadership, Cleveland College became the outstanding experiment in Adult Education in the nation. The enrollments increased from some 1400 to more than 7000 during his fifteen years of administration, and the curriculum was broadened to include a great variety of courses, credit and non-credit, in literature, music and art, as well as the more practical business courses and courses in mathematics, history, economics, government, sociology, and other fields of study usually found in such schools.

Dr. Ellis was recognized as a national leader in the field of adult education. He was for a time a member of the Executive Committee of the American Association for Adult Education, and of the American Council on Education. He was honored with the presidency of the Association of Deans and Directors of University Evening Colleges. He was for a time member of the Board of Visitors of the United States Naval Academy. He wrote many articles and brochures on child psychology, educational administration, and adult education. In the last field he had no superior and few equals in the Nation.

Dr. Ellis was retired from the directorship of Cleveland College in 1941 and immediately returned to Texas where he had served so many years. The rules respecting retirement in The University of Texas are more liberal than in many similar institutions in the United States. The Division of Extension was quick to sense Dr. Ellis' value to the institution in the field of adult education and offered him part-time employment as consultant to public schools and colleges in developing their programs of education for adults.

In his newest venture, he traveled far and wide speaking often four or five times a day to high school students and teachers on how to study, and to luncheon clubs, women's clubs, church groups and night meetings of citizens. He literally became an apostle of better education for all groups, and especially did he emphasize the need for educating adults "now" if the world were to be saved from chaos. He was called upon for advice and counsel in promoting and improving adult evening colleges at Amarillo, Dallas, Houston and other centers in the State. He never looked

backward and seemed not too much interested in writing about the past. His was the forward look, and each day was a challenge to serve humanity.

His enthusiasms and vitality astonished everyone who came in contact with him. In addition to his half-time job with the Extension Division (and it was more than half -time he gave), he managed his two pecan farms in Somervell and Robertson Counties and developed a herd of between 200 and 300 cattle on his ranch in Robertson County, which was a combination pecan farm and ranch. In these enterprises, as in his educational program, he was constantly seeking to propagate improved grasses and better breeds of cattle.

Dr. Ellis' urge to experiment was illustrated in his pecan growing enterprise. He tried several varieties by budding on native trees, carefully observing results and through this means discovered the varieties best adapted to the particular locality. His orchards now produce pecans of unusual quality. He served one year as President of the Pecan Growers Association of Texas.

In a similar way he experimented with grasses and through proper selection of grasses best suited to his ranch he was able to increase his number of cattle some three fold. His grasses attracted the attention of those in charge of agriculture at Texas A. & M. College, and classes regularly went over to inspect them. It was in pursuit of gama grass seed that grow in Waller Creek here in Austin, about which he had been told by Dr. B. C. Tharp of the Botany Department, that he spent his last moments on earth. He had just returned from the creek bed with a handful of seed when he collapsed as he seated himself in his car, clutching the grass in his hand. How illustrative of his character! -- eager, active, interested to the very end. While in the midst of life, he passed to the great beyond.

Those who knew Dr. Ellis most intimately know that he was "without guile." He appeared to have no resentment towards those who disagreed or criticized. His was a personal friendship of sympathy, warmth, and complete understanding. His life philosophy was sound; his insight into life and its problems was keen and analytical. By every measurement he was a man among men and a lover of life and of his fellow beings.

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