14. Striving for Excellence

Fred Norman and Wilber Elliott were absorbed with another musical production when the Morrison Center ground-breaking ritual was dramatized in October, 1981, while Charles Lauterbach was writing an original historical theatrical, "Chronicle of Excellence." The musicals, along with the rendition of Griffith Bratt's composition "Academic Rhapsody" were three of the many events that commemorated the institution's fiftieth year. Adapted from Miquel Cervante's classic seventeenth century novel Don Quixote, "Man from La Mancha" (a Broadway hit since 1965) opened the year-long celebration. The "Chronicle" and the "Rhapsody" premiered in September. A book-length history of the University, to be completed in 1984, was commissioned and Larry Burke's Office of News Services and Publications was loaded down with anniversary assignments.

The signal spectacles heralding Boise State's fiftieth year were the September Episcopal Church appreciation luncheon, a performance of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir accompanied by the Boise Philharmonic, and the dedication of the Pavilion led by President Keiser and Governor Evans. A Peter, Paul and Mary concert followed the founder's banquet the next evening. Told he would be in the limelight along with Eugene Chaffee, John Barnes laughed, saying he didn't realize that Gene, John, Peter, Paul and Mary were to be on the program. Referring to Boise State as his "old flame," Barnes said that his presidency was "the best ten years of my life, honestly." They were occasionally "hard and tough," even discouraging at times, yet exhilarating because so many rewards came to the institution and the state. "What a beautiful thing," Barnes observed after touring the Education Building, approved for construction before he left Boise in 1977.

Barnes had agreed to serve as honorary chairman of the University's fiftieth anniversary committee, while David Taylor was the functioning one. Keiser told Taylor's planners, representing alumni, students, faculty, staff and the community that in his judgment they would be celebrating "a half-century of respect for the spirit of learning and the unconquerable will to provide it to those for whom it was otherwise out of reach." No one knew what the economic situation would be in 1982, but it could not be as difficult as it was in 1932, the year Bishop Barnwell established the college, Keiser predicted, yet there would be parallel problems. The economy faltered during the anniversary year, budgets were cut, and several tenured professors lost their positions.

Financial stringency dampened the golden jubilee, geared to the theme, "A Destiny of Service and Excellence." Fifteen slogans had been suggested, and eleven
of them included the term "excellence." Had the institution excelled, as had many matriculants? Yes, when measured by the growth of the student body, and the expansion of the riverside campus. Numerous achievements were documented as alumni demonstrated the adequacy of their education. Retaining an interest in their school, some of them representing graduating classes back to the first one in 1934, returned to campus in 1982 to celebrate fifty years of change and promise.¹

A UNIVERSITY UNFOLDS

Asked in 1982 to review the growth of the institution since his arrival some twelve years earlier, Richard Bullington elaborated upon four primary developments; the expansion of academic and vocational programs, student enrollment increases, modern physical facilities, and services rendered to both public and private sectors. While Boise State had offered twenty bachelor degrees with eleven options in 1969, scholars could choose from sixty-three baccalaureate and five graduate programs by
the jubilee year. Whereas, about five thousand students had received guidance and instruction from less than two hundred full-time faculty when the college entered the state system, there were over ten thousand students instructed by four hundred, plus about 150 part-time faculty by 1982, and the percentage holding doctorates had increased from twenty-eight to eighty percent. Meanwhile, faculty research and publication had "sky rocketed," Bullington noted, as had various requests from private enterprise and government agencies for a variety of services.

Enrolling largely Boise area students before university rank was granted in 1974, Boise State now had students from every county. The facilities they utilized were financed by state appropriations, student revenue bonds, and many millions of dollars in private contributions. Emphasizing this generosity, John Keiser said he believed higher education was experiencing a broad trend away from public spending with attendant government controls toward greater private initiative, which might contribute to increased creativity and experimentation. Whatever the future, Boise State would continue to build upon a heritage of service and excellence, the president promised.

When he addressed the faculty in August, 1980, Keiser reminded them that by "headcount" Boise State, the largest institution of higher learning in the state, had produced almost three times more lower-division credit hours than at the upper-division level, ranking first in the state for the former and tying for second place in the latter. In 1970, BSU enrolled slightly more than thirty percent of Idaho's in-state college students, and over thirty-four percent ten years later. No institution served more residents, and most of the money allotted Boise State was spent on instruction, which should be the priority for any university, Keiser believed, with research and public service secondary.

The administration had urged the thinning of the undergraduate core curriculum with excellence as the touch-stone. There were fewer required courses than there had been in the 1970s, and the bottom grade for all of them was "C," representing minimal competence and literacy. American College Test (ACT) scores for entering freshmen had changed but little, and grades awarded at BSU during the previous five years had not been inflated. Criticism to the contrary was "misplaced snobbery," campus leaders concluded defensively.

The University Community Arts Association adopted the motto, "Excellence in the Arts," achievable it was believed when the Morrison Center opened in 1984. Arizona State University at Tempe had experienced a cultural renaissance when its Gammage Center for the performing arts, designed by Frank Lloyd Wright became operational in 1964. And, BSU's center increased aesthetic awareness throughout the region.
Nationwide, state universities harboring business schools were flooded with applicants as society became computerized. Medicine, banking and retailing, national defense, communications and research in and out of educational institutions had all been transformed by "grandfather" Charles Babbage, and more recently Thomas J. Watson. Students discouraged with the job market in liberal arts and education disciplines, crowded into the School of Business. Meanwhile, John Keiser warned that accreditation standards must be sustained despite enrollment pressures which were also being felt in vocational-technical programs.

Up-graded to a School, Vocational-Technical was given a dean rather than a director, Donald Healas who left the Cleveland, Ohio, educational system to join BSU in 1980. Thereafter, selected courses were integrated with academic programs, and the Bachelor of Applied Science degree was implemented. Too, there was increased cooperation between Education and Arts and Sciences at the master's level. The School of Health Sciences' radiologic technology program received accreditation, while the nursing faculty prepared for a final review by the National League of Nursing.

Ranked third nationally in won/lost football statistics, and generally successful in other sports, BSU found athletic prowess to be a considerable institutional asset. Outstanding was Jake Jacoby's soaring 7 feet, 5 1/4 inches flight which won for him the NCAA outdoor high jump championship in June, 1984. The coaches' challenge was to produce winning teams for both men and women with maximum integrity despite declining budgets. The student fee for intercollegiate athletics, eighteen dollars, was less than Pocatello's ($31) and Moscow's ($50), and the expenditure of appropriated money was lower than the other two universities, while funding for women's athletics increased from $5,000 to $329,000.
The administration’s objective for Boise State was prominence as a “consciously-integrated cultural and intellectual center” for the entire region. Acceptance could only be achieved by individual accomplishment, athletic and academic. Coaching, like all other teaching, must be sustained by a clearly stated dedication to quality education, the magnet which attracted legislative and community allegiance.

Considering the constituency served, pragmatists concluded that the wording on the University’s seal should be “learning, enterprise and government,” rather than the romantic Latin “Splendor Sine Occasu” (Brilliance Without End). For maximum effectiveness, Boise State should seek recognition as a cardinal community resource and respond like one. To achieve this, the State Board’s mandate that BSU should be a “mirror image” of Idaho State University in Pocatello must be changed since there were profound environmental and clientele differences. Officials felt Boise State University should be designated Idaho’s urban institution of higher learning. That distinction would improve its capability to respond to the educational needs of ethnic minorities, and brighten the “natural focus” on public affairs. As expected, urbanites in the southeast objected. Catalytic was the notion that BSU intended to broaden (even consolidate) all health programs. Pocatello physicians, a dentist and a University dean promptly formed a “support group” in order to thwart the centralization of health science studies at Boise.2
As controversial at home as the health curriculum proposal was at Pocatello, a plan for additional priority seating in the Stadium and Pavilion was vetoed by Keiser. Calling for the athletic director's resignation, he received it and appointed Eugene Bleymaier in his place. Keiser felt that the elitism implied, which elicited extremely negative reactions, was an affront to collegiality and university-community relations. BSU's three former presidents had managed this priority reasonably well, as had Keiser since 1978. Meanwhile, higher education budgets were now in trouble at Boise, Lewiston, Moscow, Pocatello, Peoria, Tucson and most every college or university city in the country except Laramie and Fairbanks, perhaps.

"College groups fight budget cutbacks," the American Federation of Teachers' (AFT) monthly On Campus declared in February, 1982. President Ronald Reagan was reducing some higher education budgets from twenty-five to sixty percent, while eliminating various assistance programs entirely. Education's dilemma was common knowledge, but On Campus was not widely read at Boise State. The AFT chapter, organized in December, 1975, when Patrick Bieter was named president, aided by treasurer Eugene Furuyama and Max Callao, secretary, had not flourished, while this American Federation of Labor affiliate had become influential on many university campuses.

Leadership at Boise was energetic, still some faculty were apathetic and other members hoped to revive a chapter of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP). Could either organization provide greater security for tenured faculty, and guarantee annual salary increases equal to the spiraling cost of living? Professors refusing to join either group assumed unionization could not resolve the crises facing their professions. Meanwhile, the administration's effort to improve the institution academically was stunted by financial exigencies.

In his August, 1981, testimony before the legislative committee concerned with postsecondary education, John Keiser suggested that certain economies might be realized through the consolidation, merger or elimination of duplicate programs throughout the state. At Boise he urged the division of the School of Arts and Sciences, the largest academic unit of its kind in Idaho, into two schools, with the social sciences located in a School of Public Affairs. The State Curriculum Committee had approved this previously, but implementation awaited funding. Should money become available, the departments of political science, philosophy, social work, sociology, anthropology, criminal justice administration, communications, military science and the Center for Research, Grants and Contracts would compose the new School.

The State Board of Examiners had decided during the summer of 1980 that all agencies and institutions must cut spending by nearly four percent. That fall, after adopting a hiring freeze, Boise State turned down nearly four thousand requests for classes filled to capacity. Additional sections could not be added, Bullington told the press, because wages for part-time faculty and classroom space were simply impossible. In fact Keiser along with Richard Gibb at Moscow, Myron Coulter in Pocatello, and Lewiston's Lee Vickers found it necessary to reluctantly endorse a forty dollar fee increase for resident students. Accepting the need in Boise was Student Body President Sally Thomas. A similar increase followed the next year when Tony Lund succeeded Thomas.

Commenting on the financial crisis, Keiser said that both his grandfather with a fourth grade education and his father, who stopped after the eighth grade, had urged
him to acquire a college degree, because it was a personal achievement that could never be taken away. Now opportunities for aspiring scholars had diminished, and the quality of their education reduced or diluted.

Higher education received almost twenty percent of the state budget when Keiser arrived in Boise in 1978. Three years later the college and university share was reduced to about sixteen percent, despite growing enrollments and inflation. Only four states provided smaller increases for higher education in 1980 than Idaho (13%), Colorado, South Dakota, Michigan and Pennsylvania, according to The Chronicle of Higher Education. Wyoming, with one university and several community colleges, had increased spending fifty percent, and Texas forty-one. Two years later, United Press International reported "Rise in college funding is lowest in 2 decades." Idaho's appropriation was down to ten percent, while energy-rich Alaska increased its spending nearly seventy percent, and Wyoming almost forty. Nationwide, with income and sales tax revenues plummeting because of the recession, the increase averaged just six percent. What happened in Boise was typical.

"Budget cuts oust eleven BSU faculty, raise student fees," Focus declared in August, 1982, ironically alongside a photograph of the 1932 class above the caption "Happy 50th Birthday BSU." In his address to the faculty, Keiser said that the single most important goal was to point out the need for more revenue. The situation had become as serious as it was when BJC struggled to keep its head above water during the 1930s. Considering the number of students turned away, faculty and staff positions lost, the resistance to equitable funding, and the declining portion of Idaho's budget for higher learning, "It is fair to ask if the public truly appreciates what we do at Boise State," Keiser lamented, echoing what other educators were saying throughout the region.

When an acquaintance aspiring to become a university president asked him for advice, based upon what he had learned since coming to Boise State, Keiser urged him to respond to the suggestions offered by town and campus groups. "The more people bleed when the university is cut, the more likely you're doing your job." Also teach whenever possible, Keiser added, because students do not get acquainted with presidents, whereas most of them remember dedicated teachers. Furthermore, the classroom experience was stimulating. Working with students while associating with hundreds of Ph.D.'s, "an unusual wellspring of talent and advice," was a privilege. Ultimately, a president's success depended upon the understanding and acceptance of the faculty, Keiser retorted, "good luck."
Attracting and retaining high-quality faculty was one of the five perennial goals officials articulated for the 1981-1982 school year. The other four objectives were a memorable, successful fiftieth anniversary, a revitalized University Foundation, enhanced coordination with the University Community Arts Association, and of course, adequate funding. Perpetually pursued, the latter had never been sufficient, thus one of the critical problems facing higher education during the 1980s was money for the recruitment and retention of superior instructors, like those who had recently resigned to accept better paying positions elsewhere.

Returning to campus in August a week before classes began fall semester, 1981, faculty attended workshops addressing the theme, "Professionalism and Excellence at the University." This in-house development program, not unique yet not ordinary, was mentioned in the "Ideas" column of *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. *Focus* highlighted another gathering in September, the conference of the Western Literature Association scheduled to convene in Boise during the first week in October. Thereafter, one of several visitors, actor John Houseman, lectured on film history. Alumnus William Agee addressed business majors and a graduate, Henry Henscheid, returned to discuss the *abilities* of handicapped students.

Receiving regional recognition in *Broadcasting* magazine was KAID for its public affairs programming. In November the annual American Indian Institute hosted Russell Means, founder of AIM (American Indian Movement), a few weeks after western writer Dorothy Johnson and another prominent author, Carolyn Heilbrun, addressed the literature conference. Meanwhile, the School of Education greeted visiting professors participating in its Education and Contemporary America Symposium.
Traditional by the spring of 1982, was the Alumni Association’s “Top Ten Scholars Banquet” for seniors with near-perfect grade point averages and the professors deemed by them the individuals contributing most to their academic successes. The scholars represented, John Keiser observed during the 1983 banquet, BSU’s definition of an educated person, “One who is literate, who can solve problems, and who understands what it means to be a citizen.” Photographs of the ten high achievers and the names of the professors selected were featured in a spring issue of Focus. Also appearing there would be two major Idaho personalities the administration sought to associate with Boise State, another way of brightening the institution’s image as did the scholars recognized at graduation each year.4

The state’s best-known public figure in 1931, Senator William E. Borah, was present when the University of Idaho inaugurated its long lasting Borah Outlawry of War Foundation. Half a century later, BSU honored former Senator Frank Church (who like Borah had headed the Senate Foreign Relations Committee) by establishing a chair of public affairs in his name. Accepting the national chairmanship of the endowment was W. Averell Harriman, former governor of New York and U.S. ambassador, while Velma Morrison held that position for Idaho. Concurrently, The Len B. Jordan Endowment for Economic Studies at Boise State University was founded. Former governor and U.S. senator, Jordan (who had deposited his papers at BSU as did Church) and his wife, Grace, were recipients of the President’s Award for Life and Letters in 1981. The ultimate goal for both the Church Chair and the Jordan Endowment was prestigious teaching positions in public affairs and economics. Until the amount needed for each chair became sufficient, the interest from monies received was used to fund lecture series and scholarships.5

Senator Frank Church at 1976 commencement. Boise State University Archives

LOSING ONE’S VIRTUE

The inauguration of the Church and Jordan endowments, completion of the Pavilion and construction of the Morrison Center were anniversary year spectacles. BSU, now designated the state’s urban university was blossoming despite the negativism in Washington and Boise regarding the funding of education. At the same time, these accomplishments were bemisted by adversities frankly recognized by veracious administrators and faculty. Interviewed by the press, Librarian Tim Brown underscored deficiencies, as had a recent study conducted by the Pacific Northwest Library Association. The collections of regional colleges and universities the size of BSU were double that of the less than three hundred thousand volumes supervised by Brown. The average elsewhere was seventy-five volumes per student, whereas there were only thirty-six at BSU.
Some officials feared the accreditation of their schools was endangered by library inadequacies. Dean Stitzel, recalling that the collection was barely adequate when the School of Business was certified in 1979, expected criticism if not rejection when his school was reviewed in 1984. "Accreditation," he euphemized, "is like virtue." Easily lost it was extremely difficult to recover. Commenting on Stitzel's dilemma, journalist Alice Dieter concluded BSU's library shortages provided an example of what was wrong with Idaho's entire educational system. Governmental parsimony had frustrated teachers and learners at all levels.

Discouraged because pay increments had been less than the annual cost of living rate, several professors resigned. One of them, economist John Mitchell, claimed he had been better off financially his first year in Boise than he was twelve years later. The failure of the state to adequately fund education was the root of the problem. Salaries were too low to retain professors able to earn one-third more in the business community.

"Skimpy BSU funds draw fire from businesses," the press reported in January, 1983. The head of an accounting firm seeking a second degree called state funding unfair, and Dean Stitzel concurred. Fourteen of his professors had left since the previous May to accept better paying positions at other institutions, public and private. Sympathetic, Boise Cascade Corporation's John Clute, Albertson's Jerry Rudd, and Douglas Spreng of Hewlett-Packard found the faculty losses regrettable because undergraduate employees needing degrees might not be able to obtain them.

Budget-cuts prevented the hiring of more teachers when over two hundred students were turned away from data processing classes. The situation was similar at Moscow and Pocatello where computer-science requests far exceeded classroom capacity. According to the press, about seven hundred applicants were denied entrance across the state. Times were tough in Idaho, the editor admitted. But, instruction in data processing was an essential service. Therefore, the Legislature should allow the expansion of these programs at the universities.

Boise State's Department of Accounting and Data Processing headed by Gordon Pirrong, one of the largest departments in the University, served well over six hundred students annually by the 1980s. Since state funding was minimal, some growth was allowed by monies solicited from alumni, public accounting firms and industry. The Center for Data Processing, a separate service unit which began fall semester, 1966, offered classes for about a decade. When Accounting became responsible for instruction, the Center (directed by Steve Maloney) was serving over forty offices besides the Registrar's, its first customer. Accounting's needs were also multiplying while its budget was increasingly pinched. More money was needed to meet the needs of students pounding on the Department's doors.

Unfortunately, taxpayers were not asked to increase higher education funding despite the demand for computer classes. Politicians remained cautious, ignoring the testimony of prominent community and business leaders. Legislative obstinacy also deflected gubernatorial requests for the universities, and inadequate appropriations forced administrators to reduce programs. At BSU the decision to eliminate baccalaureate degrees in Spanish and German, while merging the Foreign Language Department into the School of Education, elicited considerable criticism. Professor Emeritus Robert De Neufville was convinced that a "grave error of judgment" had been committed. Taking up his cause, Richard Brod of the Modern Language Association of America also addressed his grievances to the editor of the Statesman. President Keiser's view of the value and function of language studies was "short-
sighted,” Brod wrote. It was “anachronistic and based on a limited and outdated educational philosophy.”

Responding to Brod’s criticism through the same channel, a letter to the editor, Keiser was equally blunt. Traditional foreign language teaching had failed, he maintained. People wishing to learn to speak a language for practical purposes seldom enrolled in a university course. The change made at BSU was based upon the recommendations of outside evaluators. The Foreign Language Department had been preparing students for graduate school. Providing a service function for other disciplines or objectives had been secondary. With seventeen majors ten years ago, the number had not grown. Thus, BSU was now concentrating on lower-division language studies. Interviewed months later, Keiser remained convinced that this was the proper decision. The College of Education had been strengthened and more people were taking basic language courses. Eventually, he concluded, most if not all students should be required to become conversant in a second tongue, an appropriate responsibility for every literate person.7

Security guard expelling unwanted visitor.
Boise State University Archives.

SCHOOLS BECAME COLLEGES

Dropping German and Spanish majors alienated some faculty and a number of students. Degrees in languages such as these were a vital academic obligation for all universities, it was argued, but the administration’s decision prevailed. Meanwhile, the English Department obtained the publication of a scholarly journal from Arizona State University. The quarterly Rocky Mountain Review of Languages and Literature, edited at Tempe for five years, had previously been housed at the universities in Boulder, Colorado, and Salt Lake City, Utah. Appointed editor, Carol Martin, a
Catholic University of America doctorate who had been at BSU since 1972, believed the Western Writer’s Series, Ahsahta Press and the student’s award-winning cold drill influenced the decision of the Rocky Mountain Modern Language Association to place their Review at Boise State.

The History Department’s effort to acquire the editing of another journal, The Historian, was unsuccessful. At the same time, History’s Patricia Ourada along with Robert Marsh and Theodore Hopfenbeck of Criminal Justice, negotiated a Canadian studies program with Helen Groh, academic affairs consul in Seattle. Consul-General John Sharpe was present for the planting of a maple tree in September, 1982, the symbolic launching of Canadian studies as was a “High Tea” properly served in the SUB Lookout Room the following March.

Cutting foreign language majors while accepting responsibility for the publication of a literary journal and establishing a Canadian minor seemed incongruous to some observers. Yet, proponents of the latter were bullish because Idaho’s northern neighbor donated voluminous materials while providing faculty-enrichment grants. The minor was not a financial burden for BSU.8

Accepting a Canadian grant, Professor Ourada, author of a history of the northern Wisconsin Menominee Indians, studied in Nova Scotia during the summer of 1983. A teacher of the history of sports as well as Indian studies, she had served on selection committees that spring when Athletic Director Eugene Bleymaier sought replacements for both major coaches, football’s Jim Criner and basketball’s Dave Leach. Criner moved up to Big Eight competition at Iowa State University after producing winning teams at BSU for seven years. Leach, on the other hand, suffered the fate of coaches who lost more games than they won. Replacing Leach, Bobby Dye had chalked up an enviable record at Cal State-Bakersfield. Succeeding Criner was his defensive coordinator Lyle Setencich, with Boise State three years.

Inadequate funding had forced cutbacks in languages and other fields including athletics. Yet, the administration remained committed to excellence at Bronco Stadium and on the Pavilion floor. Less positive was their reaction to the report of a task force of business leaders who favored the planting of new colleges despite Idaho’s financial conservatism and the national recession. Their plan, a bold one calling for sweeping changes, failed to excite the Keiser administration largely because it included the establishment of a community college designed to serve the Boise, Nampa and Caldwell area.

The thirty-five member group led by John Clute wanted Boise State and Idaho State to abandon vocational-technical programs, turning them over to new two-year colleges, a proposition Keiser rejected. California, the national community college Memorial for student Rene Clark. Boise State University Archives
leader was retrenching as was Chicago, while strengthening senior colleges and universities. Ever changing and increasingly sophisticated technologies required enrollment in academic studies not simply vocational training. Thus, Boise State, anticipating that Vocational-Technical might take on the same credibility as other university schools, had upgraded numerous programs and adopted a four-year applied science degree. Rather than turn technical studies over to a community college with limited resources, the administration asked the State Board of Education to name all BSU schools colleges. All five academic schools became colleges, but vocational-technical was made to wait.

Pursuing their objective regarding the School of Vocational-Technical Education, administrators organized a Conference on Education for Technological Development held in July, 1983. The purpose was to explore with about eighty educators, business and political leaders not merely the elevation of the School to a College of Technology, but the founding at BSU of a Center for Technology. The reaction was positive providing funding would not be totally dependent upon state tax revenue. Wishing to provide a broad-based education which would prepare graduates for high-technology careers, officials said they expected the proposed center to be financed by state, federal and business sources.  

**KNOWLEDGE IS STRENGTH**

The goal proposed for technical education, some faculty and interested critics concluded, was visionary considering the money crunch, coupled with political and demographic realities. Could Moscow and Pocatello be expected to cooperate with a Boise-based program that might drain students, money and prestige away from their institutions? Should a young university located in a small, largely rural state expect to become a “national leader in the graphic arts” as Keiser had said during the July technology conference?

Keiser had opened the conference by demurely observing, “We may not be a Silicon Valley,” but in a few years southwestern Idaho might rival California’s high-technology region. Years earlier, Boise automobiles were seen bearing bumper stickers which read, “Don’t Californicate Idaho.” By the 1980s such provincialism had faded, and computer-related industries in that state were urged to locate near Boise. Several plants had opened their doors, and a flexible Center for Technology emphasizing the graphic arts became a reality when J.R. Simplot and other Micron Technology investors contributed stock in October, 1984, dedicated toward the construction of a five million dollar structure.

Optimism and a certain degree of innovation (creditable considering the political and financial cords that bound the institution) were characteristic of the Keiser administration, and that of Student Body President Marlyss Fairchild and her successor Deanna Weaver. In his brief May, 1983, commencement address, Keiser handed the 670 graduates (of 1,601) seated before him a final assignment, the reading of George Orwell’s novel, 1984. Completed in London in 1949, Orwell had warned that totalitarian ideas could take root in the minds of intellectuals everywhere. By 1984, the dictatorship of Big Brother and the Inner Party might rule over our society. Orwell did not believe what he described was bound to happen, and Keiser was convinced that education had preserved society from that dismal fate. Still, a number of crusaders blindly affirmed Orwell’s motto, “Ignorance is strength.” Some Idaho “stalwarts” claimed with vigor that a sixth grade education
was enough. Therefore, larger libraries and additional scientific equipment were not needed. The proper credo, Keiser believed, was "An educated citizenry, knowledge is strength." He urged graduates to cherish their education ("the one thing that cannot be taken from you") which must be wisely used and shared. 10

When the 1983 graduates departed (with expressions of relief) English major Larry Smith carried with him a Phi Kappa Phi scholarship for law studies at Duke University. Seven students (four were women) had been accepted by medical schools. Meanwhile, the nation's youngest 1982 graduate, Jay Luo now thirteen, was pursuing advanced studies at Stanford University. Senior Virgil Rock, who addressed his graduating class, was selected Idaho's outstanding handicapped student. Paralyzed since a swimming accident, Rock urged his classmates to be active contributing alumni, a plea warmly endorsed by the Association's outgoing president Cindy Maher and her successor Thomas Moore. Counting the sixteen hundred 1983 graduates, Boise State's Alumni Association now had about twenty-two thousand members. Some of them were participants when faculty, students and staff met with numerous visitors during an Excellence in Education conference in March.

Morrison Center opening night.
The provocative day-long education conference held in the Special Events Center early in the month was preceded and followed by performances in the Pavilion that attracted thousands of admirers. The Harlem Globetrotters pitched baskets three days before the high school boys state basketball tournament and the NCAA sub-regional college games. Huge crowds filled the better seats when the Oak Ridge Boys, comedian George Burns and singer Neil Young entertained. Merle Haggard, who had sung for a capacity crowd of about 3,500 in the Gymnasium during the 1970s, was applauded by many more when he twanged his "Okie from Muskogee" at the Pavilion in April.

While popular entertainers brought revelers out of the woodwork, scholarly conferences such as the one airing Middle East affairs assembled hundreds of concerned faculty, students and townspeople. Sponsored by the Frank Church Chair of Public Affairs, the conference was keynoted by former Senator Church. Meanwhile, within the administrative walls of academia, controversy had arisen after Charles McQuillen, Moscow's dean of the College of Business and Economics, succeeded Milton Small as director of the Office of the State Board of Education. According to Nicholas Gier, Moscow philosophy professor serving as president of the Idaho Federation of Teachers, McQuillen was the James Watt of higher education. Watt as Secretary of the Interior had alienated environmentalists and McQuillen was turning off educators. At the heart of Gier's dissent was the director's failure to patronize professorial tenure.

When McQuillen appeared before the Idaho Senate Health, Education and Welfare Committee, BSU's Faculty Senate Chairman Michael Zirinsky defended tenure during the televised proceedings. Thereafter, McQuillen's request for a "Mission and Scope Statement for Postsecondary Education" temporarily eclipsed the tenure debate. Rational planning was the objective, and as matters turned out, Boise State fared better than expected. The committee, composed of several trustees, the academic vice presidents and faculty senate or council chairpersons, recognized that BSU would continue to grow as statewide enrollments (27,000 full-time equivalent students) declined. Particularly pleasing was the Committee's apprehension of the urban character of the institution which made Boise State distinctive rather than Pocatello's twin. Focus readers were also impressed with McQuillen's perceptive responses to several of Larry Burke's questions posed eighteen months after he assumed the executive director post. Idaho, McQuillen concluded, "has been a state which is on the take." Since nearly all of the administrators and higher education faculty were trained elsewhere, the citizens of other states had borne the cost of providing Idaho with Ph.D's and research scientists. Thus, it was a "receiving state," and McQuillen advocated that it pay its own way.11

FACING THE FUTURE

Students and faculty at Pocatello and Boise found a common cause when nuclear arms race convocations were held on over two hundred campuses in the spring of 1982. At Boise, Sylvester Treinen, Catholic Bishop of Idaho since 1962, questioned the morality of nuclear policies in his opening address. During the months that followed, public alarm with nuclear weaponry grew and opponents brought British activist Mark Cassidy to campus in April, 1983. Of greater concern for an upset student as final examinations were approaching was the loss of a blue back-pack. "To The Crook Who Stole My Daypack" the anonymous felt pen notice placed on
several bulletin boards read, "Keep the bag — it's yours. Enjoy the left-over pizza. But please return my notes and 2 texts to Union Station (in the SUB). Without them, I die at Finals."

Equally upsetting to faculty, as the loss of books and notes were to the frustrated student, was the State Board of Education’s consideration of sabbatical and summer school moratoriums. Board member Eugene Miller of Coeur d'Alene made the motion because the Legislature continually failed to provide enough money. Janet Hay of Nampa, who rejected a sabbatical freeze, was willing to consider the withholding of summer sessions for a year or two. The debate publicized the critical financial problems facing higher education during 1983.

The press, rather consistently advocating improved funding concluded in August, "BSU squares off to face the future." The steps taken to provide continuing education geared to the real needs of industry and job-seekers were "fairly impressive." In the forefront was a proposed cooperative program with the University of Idaho to meet the educational needs of practicing engineers and technicians. At the same time, Boise State planned to assist elementary and secondary schools in placing greater emphasis upon mathematics and sciences. Meanwhile, industry was urged to forge a partnership with higher education, the objective being increased financial backing in order to meet the states' needs in a changing economy. All of this seemed to some critics to be ephemeral, yet the press considered the proposals to be aggressive planning, a "welcome change." The tax rebellion and the recession had held higher learning on the defensive too long.

The partnership with industry had already been strengthened by the construction of a water-wastewater training facility in Meridian west of Boise made possible by a federal Environmental Protection Agency $500,000 grant. On campus, a Human Performance Laboratory was added to the physical education program where students learned to evaluate fitness and the physical well-being of individuals within the community. Even more illustrative of the institution's commitment to collaboration was the development of a two-year semiconductor technology program bolstered by instructors and equipment supplied by private industry at no cost to taxpayers.

Now more effective at private fund raising, BSU added twenty-seven endowments besides those honoring former Senators Frank Church and Len Jordan, bringing Boise State Foundation's treasury up to almost two million dollars. Certainly an improvement, the amount seemed large, yet it was far from adequate considering the critical financial situation outlined by President Keiser in a January, 1983, brochure aptly dubbed "Preserving Opportunity." State appropriations had increased less than one percent since 1978, while student fees had risen over one hundred percent. Further increases might limit educational opportunities to the wealthy, Keiser feared.
State universities such as the one in Boise, bound by financial ties that determined their destinies, produced the best athletic teams possible and catered to the industrial-mercantile complex while sparring with parsimonious legislators divided by regional loyalties. Given the anti-intellectual utilitarianism of a large part of its off-campus constituency, BSU's articulation of excellence in the arts and humanities was "dreaming the impossible dream" certain faculty concluded. Still, most of those who remained over the years understood why harried administrators, performing pragmatically, adopted programs designed to satisfy the predilections of power groups.

Boys State, sponsored by the American Legion, had been an annual summer activity for many years when Business Week was brought to campus in 1977. Sponsored by the Idaho Association of Commerce and Industry, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction and BSU, the two week-long sessions attracted about five hundred high school youths in July, 1983, and forty teachers representing over one hundred public and private schools. The participants' $175 scholarships were provided by businesses, civic and educational organizations plus individual contributions.

There were a number of summer programs designed for secondary school students besides Boys State and Business Week. Girls also examined the governmental process and there were workshops for cheerleaders and other groups. Of particular worth was the Special Olympics for the handicapped. Financed by off-campus interests, activities such as these introduced hundreds of prospective students to BSU. Too, the institution fulfilled civic responsibilities while gaining the goodwill of parents and educators. People of all ages dropped in on Health Fair 83, held in the Pavilion in April. Participants were screened for weight, blood pressure, visual and hearing problems.13

Was the institution as healthy as the clientele it served? Judging by the physical appearance of the 110-acre campus, the answer was positive. Recently constructed structures, ranging from the tiny frame receptionist's cubicle near a remodeled house now the Visitor's Center, to the massive concrete Pavilion and the ten-story brick Morrison Center spoke of vitality. Former presidents Eugene Chaffee and John Barnes, The Librarian of Congress, Daniel Boorstin, emeriti professors and alumni had found the institution propulsive when they visited during the fiftieth anniversary year. Months later the Library was found to be weak, FM radio KBSU was "on edge" financially, students were frustrated by Pavilion ticketing and seating policies that were said to be unfair, and some professors were looking for greener pastures.

With all of the problems facing the institution, there remained a spirit of optimism in most quarters. Funding, while dismal when compared with many states, was finally equitable within Idaho. Enrollments, weakening elsewhere, were healthy in Boise. President Keiser, who found less conflict between administrators and faculty than he witnessed at the universities he served in Illinois, said "people talk to each other more." Why? Because of the institution's background.

Started as a liberal arts junior college by the Episcopal Church, Boise State had somehow retained an unusual degree of loyalty among faculty and staff. Burrs remained under the Bronco saddle yet the bucking, quite peppery during the Barnes years, had been reduced to a gentle lope. Plans had been laid for locating and refurbishing a one-room schoolhouse on campus as a reminder of BSU's link to the past along with Christ Chapel. Bishop Middleton Barnwell's dream of a half-century ago had come to pass. His junior college had become an urban university, one that
had gained respectability in academics, technological studies and athletics. Youthful at age fifty-two, BSU was at least competitive with similar institutions, and it had the potential to achieve distinction in selected fields during the years ahead, many people believed.

Considered outstanding with an exciting future was the affiliation of the Department of Biology with The Peregrine Fund, a non-profit organization founded at Cornell University dedicated to the preservation of endangered raptors, especially the peregrine falcon. The press reported in August, 1983, that Peregrine planned to close its Rocky Mountain Flying Hawk Reserve near Fort Collins, Colorado, and relocate on 280 acres south of Boise offered by the City Council. To rise there would be a million dollar world center for the breeding and study of birds of prey, "one of the most inspiring forms of life . . . on this planet," Boise's Morley Nelson believed. A Peregrine Fund director, Nelson had been awarded BSU's President's Award for Western Life and Letters in May, 1979, as was Elmer Keith previously and Nampa conservationist Ted Trueblood the following year. The breeding center Nelson was now urging for Boise was expected to draw foreign students and researchers to the university. With other biology majors, some of them would receive appointments to the center's forty-member field staff directed by six full-time scientists and technicians. Searching for additional ways to uniquely serve the state, BSU was an eager collaborator, the Peregrine Fund's board of directors discovered when they met in Boise in June.
Idaho, with less than a million people, now provided opportunity for higher education close to home in every section of the state. In so doing, the Legislature had been tardy and reluctant while Governors Samuelson, Andrus and Evans had accepted the inevitability of the growth of Boise's college. In the process there were few if any "love feasts" with the State House, the State Board of Education or between administrators and faculty. Yet, the incongruity that frequently characterised relationships, especially during the 1970s as the college emerged, was generally nourishing. BSU's centennial history might portray the first half-century the most exciting part of the institution's struggle to bridge the educational gap between Moscow and Pocatello.14

Dedication of the Rocky Mountain Peregrine Center.