

War Years

CHAPTER XI

The years 1936 to 1939 were academic building years in which a strong faculty existed; one that was a happy and united family, and years in which the students were an exceptional and capable group, coming largely from the Boise area. Those who attended here and those who taught had necessarily to be a group having faith in an institution whose destiny was not determined, but whose mission as a higher institution was a sure and stable one.

When one looks at the student bodies of the years 1932 to 1939, small in numbers but high in quality, one recognizes the seriousness of this group. One finds among the students such personalities as Sam Forter (1935), gunnery hero of the Cruiser "Boise" against the Japanese in the Southwest Pacific, now a research man at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology; Loren Hicks (1935), first principal of both Campus Grade School and Borah High School; Robert (Bud) Gavin (1936), also a naval officer during World War II who went through the agonies of Pearl Harbor aboard the Battleship "California", is now an optometrist; Colonels Kenneth Robertson (1934), Vernon Gilbert (1934), and Sam Hays (1938), had careers in the army; James D. McClary (1936), Vice-President in charge of Admin-

istration at Morrison-Knudsen and a member of the Board of Trustees of Boise College; John Carver (1937), Commissioner, Federal Power Commission, Department of the Interior; Jerry Hannifin (1937), Hispanic American correspondent for *Life Magazine*; and Albert Bush (1937), a Professor of Engineering at U.C.L.A. Otto Power (1934), Oral Andrews (1934), Owen Sproat (1934), Bernard Holden (1934), and the three Day brothers—Ernest (1939), Robert (1940) and Don (1944)—are all outstanding business and civic leaders in Idaho.

Others have their doctorates, such as Dr. Willis Hughes (1937), a professor at Wisconsin State University in Superior; Dr. Merle Wells (1939) of the Idaho Historical Society; Dr. Robert Jenkins (1937), anesthesiologist at St. Luke's Hospital; and Dr. John Edlefsen (1936), who is an authority on the Basque people and has traveled widely in his sociological research and study. There are many professional people—engineers, military officers, educators, and scientists—who came out of these early classes.

The young women of these classes have not been tabulated because of the almost impossible job of following up their work, particularly those who have become housewives—an overwhelming majority. Name changes due to marriage make a comprehensive study impractical under the most ideal conditions and well-nigh impossible in a junior college.

The faculty from 1932 to 1939 remained very stable. Out of the 13 who were members of the faculty in 1932, 8 were members in the fall of 1940 and 7 of these remained until retirement or are still with the College. In other words, these people remained for a total of 202 years or an average of 29 years each in spite of the low salaries. The foremost reason for the persistence of this group as employees of Boise Junior College was the real satisfaction in the job they were doing in educating the young people of this area and the belief that here was a college that was "going places."

With the advent of a public institution, it was necessary to add many new instructors in the fall of 1939. Some 12 full-

time and part-time people were secured in that year. Those who persisted for a period of more than 15 years were Mr. Conan E. Mathews, art; Adelaide Anderson, music; and C. T. Edlefsen, secretarial science. Mrs. Anderson is still with the College, but Dr. Edlefsen retired in June of 1969. Mr. Mathews remained until 1956 and except for his first three years, took a very active part in the administration of the institution.

Mrs. Ada (Poirier) Burke joined the faculty during the first year on the new campus in September of 1940. While she had not had experience as a dean of women prior to coming to Boise, her 15 years with the College until 1955 were splendid years for the students of this institution. She gave generously of herself and established traditions during not only the time she was here, but for those who succeeded her. She had a host of friends when she left to take a like position at Ventura College in California.

Except for a close budget, the conditions of the College at this period can be characterized as idyllic. Salaries probably averaged about \$1,300 during this period, 1936 to 1939, but the student-faculty-administration relationship was very satisfying and progressive. It is small wonder that many of these young people have become leaders in their community or in the State or nation.

It was during this period that Boise Junior College had left the status of a private college from which the 1939 graduates emerged in June of that year, to the public one which opened in September 1939, the same month World War II began.

By the summer of 1941 it was evident that most of the world was headed for another one of its catastrophic periods of world war. Hitler had taken over in Germany; Chamberlain, Britain's prime minister at this time, had failed in his attempt to appease Hitler and the latter had marched into Austria, Czechoslovakia, Poland and France. The agreement between Hitler and Stalin was broken when the former marched from occupied Poland into Russia on June 22, 1941, three weeks after the 1941 class was graduated.

This institution, its faculty, students and administration, had been tempered in a period of intense financial depression, heavy unemployment, and world war psychology. The Selective Service System, better known as the draft, was established within a month after students appeared on the new campus and has remained during the last 29 years.

This was a much more unstable world situation than the one we decry at the present time. Dictators were far more dictatorial (Stalin, Hitler, Mussolini), and even jobs, except for the escalating military, were in short supply. Pearl Harbor was less than one year away and the United States' loan of warships to Great Britain had begun within a few months after the move to the new college campus.

The war came to Boise Junior College before it was formally recognized as a war by the United States Government. In the school year of 1940 the national government, anticipating the possibility of being dragged into the European war, set up a flight training program where most of the cost was paid by the Federal Government. This was called the Civilian Pilot Training Program. This program was first headed by the instructor in engineering, Mr. Douglas B. Cruickshank, for the 1939-40 year. At the end of that year, wartime conditions leading the United States toward war struck the reserve officers of the nation and on August 7, 1940, "The Board of Trustees granted Mr. D. B. Cruickshank, a member of the junior college faculty, a year's leave of absence for the 1940-41 academic term in order that he might participate in active military duty, being a Reserve Officer of the United States Army."¹ This leave of absence was continued until August of 1945.

It was immediately necessary to get someone else to carry on with the C.P.T. program which had been enlarged the previous June. "The President of the College and the Secretary-Treasurer of the Board of Trustees were given authority to execute a Civil Aeronautics Authority Contract with the Federal Government covering the training of 30 student pilots."² With

an enlarged program—from 10 to 30 students—and with the leave of absence for Mr. Cruickshank, another male faculty member was sought who might take this program in addition to his regular duties.

Mr. J. Calvin Emerson, the bursar and head of the Chemistry Department, became interested in this position and at the suggestion of President Chaffee, the Board of Trustees selected him to take on this additional work. Within a month, Mr. Emerson was urged to take a position with the C.A.A. in their regional flight training. He requested and received a leave of absence and Mr. H. A. Reed took over the program and also taught electronics at the College.

During the summer of 1940 the College administration had many problems contingent with the war situation and its change in faculty personnel as indicated above. This of course was mixed with completing the first building program on the new campus where there were no roads or sidewalks, buying furniture for the Administration-Classroom Building, and hiring 20 new faculty members, equal in number to the existing faculty.

The campus construction took in not only academic buildings and a gymnasium, but the planting of lawns and general landscaping. One cannot mention this area of the College without paying tribute to one who was neither an administrator nor a faculty member—Mr. Charles O. Brown. For 31 years (1936-1967) Mr. Brown was responsible for the buildings and grounds. This was particularly true during the war years when he single-handedly maintained these areas due entirely to his pride in both the College and his own workmanship. Regardless of his long tenure of service, whether early in those 30 years or late, he served faculty and students with a constant cheerfulness and efficiency well summed up in the dedication to him in the 1963 *Les Bois*: "During all these years his work has not been measured in eight hour days, but rather in periods of extended, devoted service crowned by a ready smile and a humorous phrase." To the many he met every day he was the College—he served them.

At the same time the construction was taking place, many questions came from the young men anticipating the draft by the Selective Service on October 1, 1940. All this took a toll as far as administration was concerned and in the matter of public relations there was no full-time member other than the president engaged in any of the administration at the College. This included the conditions in the business office, publicity, and in general, all public relations which centered around the president's office during this period of rapid change and growth. At this time the United States was rapidly drifting toward war with Germany and Italy on the one side of the world and Japan on the other. The reason that all this centered in the president's office was because the new junior college, just one-year old as a public institution and not sure of its total revenues or of its students who might be called by war, had to walk with a cautious step in regard to administrative expenses. There was also a matter of pending accreditation and the natural opposition from colleges from the immediate area in having this new and burgeoning institution become accredited as an equal with them. *

When one considers the reserve officers going into the military service in the fall of 1940 and the new faculty members who had to be hired in their places, to say nothing of 15 to 20 additional faculty to take care of the added students, it was easy to understand that the president had a busy time.

The social life of the students in this war period was largely carried on by affairs at the College, in hotel ballrooms, and in public meeting places such as the two country clubs—Hillcrest and Mode. Reminiscent of the war time situation were such organizations as Campus Canteens for service men stationed at Gowen Field, the Red Cross, Minute Maids, and Lifelines.

Boise Junior College students felt the need of doing something to aid the war effort on the campus, thus the Red Cross chapter was established in January. Throughout the year students have been making surgical dressings, aiding in the canteen at the depot, taking first aid classes, taking water safety courses, and helping in the production of needed articles.³

While the Red Cross was furnishing the actual blood from its bloodbanks during the war years, Mrs. Ralph Falk, wife of a Boise physician, realized the necessity of organizing a group to solicit the actual blood donors. She organized a group of some 20 Boise Junior College co-eds and named the group the Lifelines. These young women attended public meetings all over Boise, made solicitations of the attending public, and helped those who were willing to donate blood to fill out cards indicating this willingness. The distinctive costume that the girls wore was designed and incorporated by Mrs. Falk and soon became familiar to the public through newspaper, radio, and television publicity. This uniform assured the public that each girl wearing it was a sincere, bona fide member of the Lifelines and was working in a dedicated way to assist in the blood donations. Aided and abetted by Mrs. Falk and a faculty advisor, the girls gave freely of their time. The faculty advisor was often the wife of a college professor or an actual faculty woman who assisted the Lifelines in addition to her regular instructional duties.

The Campus Canteens were sponsored by the Associated Women's club for officers from Gowen Field and Mountain Home Air Force Base. "The canteens consisted of dancing, games, and refreshments with fifty junior college girls acting as hostesses."⁴

The Paul Revere Chapter of the Minute Maids ". . . sold bonds and stamps at the noon luncheons of several Boise service clubs, appeared at the bond premieres held in conjunction with the war loan drives, and sold war stamps and bonds at the weekly school assemblies . . . They joined other Minute Maid groups on several Saturday nights to go to Mountain Home where they served as hostesses at the air base officers' club."⁵

Every club on campus "did its bit" for the war effort. Some sold stamps and bonds, some rolled bandages, and the Home Economics members used their talents by cooking dinners for B.J.C. men who were called into the service. Students in welding were being placed in shipyards to meet the great need for experienced personnel in this demanding field.

The personnel of the Board of Trustees remained fairly constant with what it had been in 1936-37 except for the change that took place when B. W. Oppenheim resigned in February of 1939 and was succeeded by E. D. Baird, and the deaths of Mr. Haga and Mr. Chapman on March 10 and April 20 of 1943. The whole situation at the College, in fact, can well be summed up as one of relative stability during a period of international instability.

After July 1940, twelve male members of the faculty who were qualified for the military went into the service, some as reserve officers, others as enlisted men. This happened within four short years, from the fall of 1940 to the fall of 1944. The twelve who were in the service were granted leaves of absence for the duration of the war. They were: Robert deNeufville, Clisby Edlefsen, Harry Jacoby, Bruce Budge, J. Roy Schwartz, Norman Adkison, Douglas Cruickshank, C. Barton McMath, Stanley Mittelstaedt, Dale Arvey, Vernon Beckwith, and Eugene B. Chaffee. Five male members remained on duty with the College during this period.

The fall of 1942 was a dismal one for faculty and students alike; this was apparent to all. The student body had dwindled and the pinch-hitting administration with Dr. Francis Haines as president had problems communicating with the faculty as did the faculty with the administration. By October 1 when President Chaffee was on his way west to report to the Naval Air Station at Pasco, Washington, he motored through Boise on his way from Chicago to the Washington city. He was besieged by faculty members and the business manager, Gordon Olsen, (he resigned two weeks later), with statements that the administration did not understand the problems of the College and that the College would close its doors if some changes were not made.

Dr. Francis Haines, the acting-president, who had been recommended by President Chaffee to serve during the war interim, was very gloomy when he wrote and indicated that the

school was probably going to close and it would be chalked up as his failure. Chaffee replied that nothing would close the College; it was on a solid base and that the administration and faculty must bear with wartime gloom and that with the return of peace and a normal student situation, brighter times would prevail.

It was apparent to everyone that the present regime would not last too long, though to forestall such an event, at the request of the Board of Trustees, an advisory committee was elected by the faculty in November to assist Acting President Haines. It was composed of Mrs. Ada Y. Hatch, Dale Arvey, Harold A. Reed, and Conan Mathews as Chairman. By mid-December, conditions had reached such a state that Dr. Haines resigned, the advisory committee became a committee of administration, and within two months, Conan E. Mathews was made Executive Dean and Acting President. He held this position for the two school years of 1943-44 and 1944-45.

When one tries objectively to determine the failure, it was partly due to the personality of Dr. Haines. He was outstanding as a dean of men and history instructor, but was unable to gain the support of the faculty members as acting president. In fact, immediately after he was selected in early June of 1942 to be acting president and prior to Chaffee's departure for service with the navy, old-time faculty members who had served for most of the College's ten years visited President Chaffee and indicated their lack of faith in Dr. Haines as an administrator.

While the shift in the chief administrators during the months of June through December of 1942 was a temporary problem, the basis for the College's continued service was a stable one with little thought of the closure of the institution. Many of the junior colleges throughout the United States did close during the years of American participation in World War II, but Boise's great need for a college made such a closing very remote. This is indicated in a letter of October 28, 1942 from

Mr. O. O. Haga, the chairman of the Boise Junior College Board of Trustees, to Dr. Haines:

The effect of the war on the schools and colleges is becoming more and more serious as time goes on. It presents so many problems that disturb the normal course of procedure that it seems necessary to resort to new means in an endeavor to stabilize, if possible, the attendance of students and get more effective teamwork from students, teachers, and our citizens generally in order to keep Boise Junior college in the foreground of the community's most important institutions.

I am convinced that the citizens generally are as much interested as they ever were in maintaining the enrollment and the scholastic standing of the college and we shall again have to call on various community organizations and community leaders to resume the interest which they manifested in the college prior to the time the district was organized and took over the financing and management thereof.

The war period proved to be one of the most stable financially of any during the years of the College's existence. That is to say, the income during this period more than merely satisfied the current needs for annual expenditures. This was partly due to the rapid escalation of the financial tax sources—the property tax and the liquor tax. For the people who remained on the College faculty during World War II, this probably seemed a grim period, but when judged through the financial situation at the College, it can almost be referred to as "the golden age."

Another way to indicate the financial condition for this year can be expressed in revenue per student in attendance; this stood at \$433 for each student during the 1942-43 year.

During the second full academic year of the war period, 1943-44, conditions were also favorable financially. While revenue declined, expenditures also declined. This was due largely to the fall in student enrollment, dropping from around 300 students of the previous year, 1942-43, to the equivalent of less than 200, the actual being 106 freshmen, 42 sophomores, and 43 part-time students. It is unlikely that there would have been more than 175 students on the campus on any given day. The total tuition collected had decreased to \$7,938. This, with tax

sources included, makes the amount available run around \$650 per student.

The College could have run without any fees or tuition for the entire course of the war since the revenue from direct taxes and State liquor funds exceeded the demand of a limited faculty that had lost half of its members in a period of one to two years. Looking back on this period, faculty salaries should have been raised, but with a caretaking administration in wartime, no acting president could feel empowered to go ahead during the uncertainties of these days. The administration did not have the problems that usually come along with decreased enrollment, namely the termination of contracts with faculty members due to the great decline in revenue from the student tuition and fees. The fact that many faculty members had entered the military service meant that no force needed to be put on any faculty member to resign—the youthfulness of the faculty and the pressure of military service took care of that.

Revenue was about the only bright side for the College during the war years. There was always the threat of a reduced faculty and a drop in student enrollment. Few activities were possible and there were almost no inter-collegiate athletics. Football dwindled to the intra-mural type for the falls of 1943 and 1944. Basketball was a catch-as-catch-can type of activity and there was always the threat that any able-bodied male student that might be present would be picked up by the Selective Service.

While the College had some administrative problems during the latter half of 1942, these were soon straightened out under the excellent leadership of Conan Mathews. As a result, affairs were on an even keel by the end of the war in August 1945.

¹Board of Trustees Meeting, Boise Junior College District. Minutes, August 7, 1940.

²Ibid, June 19, 1940.

³*Les Bois*, 1944. p.54.

*See Chapter VII.

⁴*Les Bois*, 1944. p.53.

⁵Ibid. p.52.



Ada Burke (center), Dean of Women 1940-1955 and A.W.S. Council.



Miss Helen Moore (center) served the College for 21 years, five of these as Dean of Women.



Dr. John Phillips, Dean, chats with a student.

Mrs. Camille B. Power (center row right) founder, and Dr. Robert deNeufville, French and German (right) with members of the French Club.





Boise in the 1860's by Louis Peck, Art Department head



Secretarial studies train students in a variety of business skills.



Dr. Clisby T. Edlefsen, Head of the Business Department 1946-1966



Dr. Robert Rose, Head of the Business Department 1966-1970



Dr. Donald Obee—Chairman, Division of Life Sciences since 1947, and students.



Jeanne Stearns, physics and mathematics instructor 1946-1968.



J. Roy Schwartz, Professor of English since 1940.



Thelma Allison, Home Economics, 1946-



Music Auditorium



Dedication of Cunningham Memorial Organ in May 1953



Mr. C. Griffith Bratt and A Cappella Choir



1955 B.J.C. Symphony Orchestra. Conductor John Best 1947—; Carroll Meyer, piano instructor, at the concert grand 1948—.



(Left) Mrs. Kathryn Eckhardt Mitchell (standing at left), first Symphony conductor and violin.

(Below) Mrs. Lucille Forter, voice instructor, pours at an Associated Women's annual event—the Big Sister Tea.





Miss Florence Miles, Head of the Nursing Department (right)



Student nurses at work



Machine repair



Welding



1954 Processional in front of Administration Building



Several 1937 graduates



Mrs. Violet Obenchain and son Carl—1955 graduates



Faculty—1954 Commencement