

# *A Pasture for the Broncos*

## CHAPTER XVI

Interest in athletics and other recreational activities has been a part of Boise since its founding. Polo had been developed to a great extent, largely because of the interest of the cavalry unit, the military, and citizens of the city, since the first days of the settlement of this town in July 1863. In fact, polo persisted until around 1953. In the course of its 90 year duration, Bernard Lemp, a popular mayor and the son of one of Boise's earliest territorial business men who was also a mayor, was killed in a polo game in the late 1920's.

Baseball and football have always been major interests in Boise. In a western Idaho league, Walter Johnson, at that time with Weiser, played his first baseball here and later became one of the all-time great pitchers in professional baseball in the United States. He pitched many games at Old Cody Park, Boise's early recreation park, now East Junior High School's field.

About this same time, 1911 to 1913, Boise High School developed a nationally recognized football team under the leadership of a young lawyer who had just come to Boise—Oscar W. Worthwine. His interest in this sport continued until his death in 1962. He was a dynamic force in shaping football policy while

a member of the Board of Trustees of Boise Junior College during the decade of the 1950's.

Old Cody Park on Warm Springs Avenue, a private recreational venture, was purchased by the Boise Independent School District in 1930 and became Public School Field. As previously indicated, through the generosity of the Independent School Board, it was the athletic field for the College in all of its physical education and sports activities (except basketball), and continued to be so for a period of eight years, until the move to the new campus in September of 1940. In fact, in 1935, the Junior Chamber of Commerce sponsored the lighting of the Public School Field for junior college football games. This equipment was moved to the College field on the 24th of September, 1940 and was assembled by workmen who ". . . focused the lights on the new Boise Junior College football field and prepared them for the first night practice of the Broncos."<sup>1</sup> This was the first time the Boise Junior College Broncos had played a home game at night on the new campus and Coach Harry Jacoby stated that he would ". . . put the boys through two nights of practice under the lights before their opening game of the season against Carroll College of Helena."<sup>2</sup> He also stated, "Turf on the field, though planted only last June, is in excellent condition."<sup>3</sup>

The College activities were transferred from the Public School Field, only three blocks east of St. Margaret's Hall, to the new College field occupying roughly the space of the present baseball diamond immediately north of the new 1967 Student Union Building at Bellevue and Lincoln. Here, for two years, football was played until interrupted in the fall of 1942 by World War II. Four years later, with the return of Coach Harry Jacoby from the world conflict in the Southwest Pacific, football, which had been virtually abandoned during the war, was resumed on this field.

Immediately after the war it was obvious that a new water source must be found for irrigation purposes. When the football field had been built in 1940, an 18 inch drainage line was tapped

and the water run into a sump for supply purposes. Unfortunately, this was found to be inadequate in the drier months. Some 10 acres of lawns immediately in front of the Administration Building and between the cross-campus roads leading through the center of the campus had also been added and this made it doubly necessary to create a new water source. This was done in May of 1947 by drilling an 18 inch well 200 feet deep. Specialists in the field of irrigation expressed the belief that this would be adequate for all future uses and it proved satisfactory for a period of eight years, but as the lawns were added to the east and north, this too proved inadequate.

Between 1951 and 1961, the College bought 200 shares of the South Boise Water Company's rights to the Boise River. The company had the second oldest water rights on the Boise River. Since that period, the College has been able to irrigate both by direct flooding and portable overhead sprinkling. It is probable that still another source of water supply for irrigation must be secured to take care of the rapid expansion of lawns and landscape area.

By 1949, the Broncos had won 30 consecutive football games and played in the Shrine Potato Bowl in California where they defeated Taft College. This excellent record, plus the constant demand of the alumni of the University of Idaho that it play at least one football game in Boise every year, brought about the building of Bronco Stadium during the summer of 1950. Year after year, alumni groups of the University talked about constructing a stadium in Boise, but took no steps to bring this about.

Through the spring and summer months of 1949, the inadequacies of the 1940-1950 stadium were discussed by the Board of Trustees and aired in the local newspaper. In October 1949, Mr. James L. Brown, manager of the *Idaho Daily Statesman*, approached individual members of the College Board of Trustees indicating his willingness to assist the College in building a stadium that could be financed by the issuance of

non-interest-bearing debenture bonds. The College Board did not feel that it could sponsor such a stadium as a tax supported venture, but under Oscar Worthwine's legal hand, a private satellite of the College was developed so that such financing could take place—Bronco Stadium Inc. Interested sponsors were urged to support this venture.

On December 15, 1949, Articles of Incorporation for Bronco Stadium Inc., were drawn up. The Articles state that it was to be “. . . a non-profit cooperative corporation” formed for “. . . scholastic, social, benevolent, athletic, and patriotic purposes, and especially, but not in limitation of, its general powers.” Its purpose was to secure funds with which to build a stadium on the campus of Boise Junior College for holding athletic contests and other public gatherings including community activities such as music festivals; to raise funds for scholarships, fellowships, and scholarship prizes of every kind and character; and to improve the health and physical condition of its members. In fact, its scope was so broad that there was almost nothing in the way of entertainment and amusement that could not be staged in it.

The term of the corporation's life was 50 years which makes it valid up to the year 2,000 A.D. The by-laws drawn up on December 22, 1949, made the Boise Junior College District trustee members the five governing members of Bronco Stadium Inc.

About this same time, the College was offered 500,000 board feet of dimension timber that was surplus at the Hanford Atomic Energy Station. The College was required to move this prime timber from Pasco, Washington to the campus site.

In the early months of 1950, the *Idaho Daily Statesman* contributed \$90,000 and Idaho Power Company \$10,000, to building the stadium through non-interest-bearing debenture bonds. The Federal Government contributed most of the dimensional timber and the College made up the remaining money, \$45,000, which was for the athletic field, dressing rooms,

booths for ticket sales, and concession facilities. The University of Idaho alumni association was asked to contribute, but except for \$50 privately contributed by Kenneth O'Leary, no money was received from the alumni. Other contributions were made by Mr. & Mrs. H. W. Morrison, and the Boise Payette Lumber Company. The Jordan-Wilcomb Contracting Company of Boise donated \$1,732.50 for a score board.

On May 24, 1950, "After due consideration of all bids received, motion was duly made, seconded, and unanimously carried, awarding the contract to J. H. Wise and Son of Boise, Idaho, in the total amount of \$86,100. The Statesman Printing Company, through the treasurer, James L. Brown, presented a written guarantee for the financing of the cost of Bronco Stadium."<sup>4</sup>

By June 1, 1950, construction of the stadium was on its way. It was set at an angle of 45 degrees for the purpose of presenting the two teams on the field with the sun at a right angle to the playing field. Had it faced either directly east and west or north and south, one team would have been blinded by the sun. The angle at which the field was set was determined by the College architects, Hummel, Hummel, and Jones. Calculation was made so that by 3 o'clock in mid-October, the sun would be at a direct 90 degree angle to the field of play. This date was taken as a mid-point in the usual football season that the Bronco teams had traditionally used for years, the season starting in the middle of September and ending in the middle of November.

Formal dedication of Bronco Stadium took place in the evening of September 22, 1950 immediately prior to the football game between Boise Junior College and Modesto Junior College of California. Bands from the Boise Valley and from the universities of Idaho and Utah whose football teams had competed against one another earlier in the day took part in the ceremonies and a color guard, composed of a representative from each branch of the armed forces, conducted the first flag raising ceremony to be held in the new stadium.

In his dedication speech, the Reverend Frank A. Rhea, who had been a part-time instructor at the College from 1932 to 1934, stated:

This stadium is now dedicated to our splendid youth with all of their qualities of mind, body and soul. Here is a field of honor upon which our youth will contend, not in hatred and strife, but in earnest rivalry with strength that will contend with strength, skill with skill, in sportsmanship and mutual respect.

This is a happy occasion when the public spirit of some of our citizens and the athletic prowess of our youth join in this common undertaking. We salute the citizens of Boise whose public spirit has made this arena a reality and we salute the youth who will here display the strength of their bodies, the cunning of their minds, and the greatness of their spirits.<sup>5</sup>

This stadium rapidly became the substitute for an auditorium during good weather for most of the civic events that required large seating capacity. The stadium was constructed to accommodate a capacity crowd of 10,800 plus whatever portable seats could be put at one end or both ends of the playing field. Volcanic cinders were hauled from a deposit in Owyhee County to the campus. These were used as the surface for a major running track.

Both the football field and the track were soon being used by the high schools, both public and private, in the immediate Boise area. With as many as 18 football games being played each season in the high school league, one each by the Optimist Club of Boise to determine midget team champions and the University of Idaho and usually four or five by Boise Junior College, this added up to a total of at least 25 games played there during the two-month season. As Boise developed additional high schools, the B.J.C. field was the only one in this part of the state that could accommodate the crowds that swarmed into the stadium during the Armistice Day (Veteran's Day) football classic. This event required at least 2,000 additional, temporary seats, due largely to the junior high schools' and senior high schools' marching bands and drill teams.

When Bishop Kelly High School (Catholic Parochial) succeeded St. Teresa's Academy, Bronco Stadium became its home

field in reality for four years. The stadium was always crowded when the three public high schools played each other or when the home team played Caldwell or Nampa.

Of course, the game of all games as far as the College was concerned, was the National Junior College Athletic Association championship game played on this field in 1958 with Boise winning over Tyler Junior College of Texas by a score of 22 to 0.

The most impressive event and one which appealed to the general public was not a football game but the Boise Centennial celebrating 100 years since the city's founding in early July 1863. Western scenes involving covered wagons with accompanying horses and riders depicted the historical period from 1811 to 1910. Extensive use was made of the turf as the stage for the moving centennial covering the advent of the white man and the growth of his institutions in Southwest Idaho after the founding of the city.

The one man and institution that furnished the initiative and the necessary money to finance this stadium more than any other person was Mr. James L. Brown and the *Idaho Daily Statesman*. The owner of the newspaper, Mrs. Margaret Cobb Ailshie, had personally approved this project.

The interest of the newspaper did not wane after the initial financing of the stadium and on August 14, 1950, the chairman of the Boise Junior College Board of Trustees reported that "The Statesman Printing Company had offered \$500 for exclusive radio rights at the stadium for the current year and suggested that the Directors should accept the offer, it being understood that KIDO would handle the broadcasting. Whereupon, by motion regularly made, seconded and carried, the Directors accepted the offer of the Statesman Printing Company to pay \$500 for exclusive radio rights on behalf of KIDO for the first year's operation of the stadium."<sup>6</sup> About this same time, Mr. Brown stated that he would back a worthy use of the stadium if a local organization was too weak or small to carry the load.

Probably no stadium in the country had such a large number of winning games for the home team played on its own turf. Boise Junior College alone played more than 100 winning games here. This stadium became the symbol—the home of the winning Broncos and likewise for the high schools of the city who frequently rated one, two and three as the top high school teams of this area—it was a good luck omen. The last ten years have been the most impressive decade in inter-scholastic high school contests in Boise.

President Dwight D. Eisenhower and many presidential candidates have used this field when appearing in Southwest Idaho to bring their messages to the people of Southwest Idaho. This stadium has truly had a public, universal usage, serving all sections of the state.

The second greatest usage, second only to the athletic events of football and track, has been the annual appearance for almost 20 years of the Shrine Circus. For three or four days each June, the field becomes the stage for the circus with such animals as elephants and horses linked with the acrobatic performers on high trapezes to give the modern version to the tent shows provided in earlier decades by such outstanding circus performers as Barnum and Bailey and the Ringling Brothers.

The foresight of Mr. Brown and the Boise Junior College Board of Trustees in providing this recreational facility cannot be over-emphasized.

The cost of the stadium was originally financed by the individuals and corporations listed on pages 00 and 00 except for the team showers, the playing field and the running track which were financed by the College.

The non-interest-bearing debenture bonds were retired by revenue coming from public performances in the stadium for which the sponsor charged admission; for example, the Shrine Circus and the University of Idaho football game receipts from rentals have averaged \$2,700 annually.<sup>7</sup>

The actual maintenance and repair was the financial responsibility of Boise Junior College. This has run from \$3,000 to \$8,000 per year.<sup>8</sup> By 1962 the cost of repairs to the stadium had risen while income had slowly declined; Boise Junior College felt morally responsible to bridge this gap by paying \$3,000 for its use of the stadium to help retire the 1950 debenture bonds.<sup>9</sup> The high school and other public schools of the area paid only 10% of gate receipts for rental of the stadium until July 1, 1963. At that time, an agreement was made with the Boise Public Schools for \$3,000 annual rental for total use of the stadium—football games, track meets, band concerts, and high school graduations.<sup>10</sup> In 1966, because of the increased use of the stadium by all three public high schools instead of two as formerly, the amount was raised to \$4,500.<sup>11</sup>

The man who made the stadium an institution of service was Vice-President Willis L. Gottenberg. He managed it so well that it became the center of all community activities. He handled arrangements for home and Bowl games and at the same time represented the College as a dominant personality in the Intermountain Collegiate Athletic Conference of which he was the founder and president for many years. This required a quality of personality which readily got the cooperation of businessmen when extra funds might be needed for special trips and required also the ability to work with coaches all over the Northwest while arranging schedules. In some instances, it was also necessary to be able to work with college presidents. Mr. Gottenberg gave tremendously of his time and talent to the point of exhaustion.

Over the past two decades, the stadium has been a self-liquidating enterprise. It proved what Mr. James L. Brown of the *Idaho Statesman* had contended, that it could be built with initial financing from private sources by letting subsequent users pay the capital cost back to the original donors.

It is now time to build another, more comprehensive stadium. Unless it is built off the present campus to give more

space for regular academic buildings, it should be placed in the present identical position. This would save two hundred thousand dollars in capital costs, with the least expenditure of actual campus grounds, and it will place the competitors on the field in the most comfortable and errorless position primarily reducing eye strain and promoting better performance than would a stadium where one team or the other looks into the sun.

Bronco Stadium has done everything its promoters hoped it would do in satisfying the recreational and competitive needs for the Boise area. The new stadium needs only to follow the prototype of Bronco Stadium with certain modifications and an efficient, serviceable facility for all of Boise will result. This could be the second stadium largely contributed to by the general public with a self-liquidating financial base. It is wrong for the students of Boise State College to be forced to pay for a facility that has proved it is used by the general public at least 80% of the time. It is being constructed for the community's use and it should be paid for by that group. College education costs each student; a multi-million dollar stadium should not be added to that cost.

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<sup>1</sup>*Idaho Daily Statesman*, September 25, 1940.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup>Minutes, Board of Trustees Meeting, Bronco Stadium Inc. May 24, 1950.

<sup>5</sup>*Idaho Daily Statesman*, September 23, 1950.

<sup>6</sup>Board of Trustees Meeting, Boise Junior College District. Minutes, August 14, 1950.

<sup>7</sup>*Boise Junior College District Audit Reports*, 1951 to 1966.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup>Graff Accounting Service, *Boise Junior College District Audit Report for the fiscal year ended June 30, 1962*. Schedule J1.

<sup>10</sup>Low, Viehweg, Hill & Grow, Certified Public Accountants. *Boise Junior College Report on Examination of Accounts as at June 30, 1964*. p.27.

<sup>11</sup>Low, Viehweg, Hill & Grow, Certified Public Accountants. *Boise College and Boise Junior College Report on Examination of Accounts as at June 30, 1967*. Exhibit L.