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TEMPLE JUNIOR COLLEGE

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- *Leopard Tales* student newsletter, Oct. 19, 1956

Chapter 6

A Permanent Home, at Last

Sophomore Ann Odom, co-editor of the 1949-1950 student newspaper the *Leopard Tales*, may have been wishfully thinking – or maybe she had a crystal ball.

Amid the debate and discussion about whether Temple Junior College should separate from Temple High School and create its own campus, Ms. Odom admitted to big dreams in her April 1950 student editorial.

“Imagine a winding road leading up to a rather small, but neat and beautiful building with an inscription over the door ‘Temple Junior College, established in 1953.’ Wouldn’t that be wonderful if that dream could come true, and the old prison camp adjoining McCloskey hospital could be converted into a building for the college?”

She admitted excitement over the serious talks underway among the college’s administrators, school trustees and the city commission. “Just think of the hundreds of students who would benefit. In a few years, the school could have the nice, big lounge we’ve been dreaming of for so long and modern classrooms and laboratories; and

in a few more years, it could add a gym and dormitories.... Now we can see that maybe our dreams can turn to hopes, then our hopes to realities.”

Her dreams took seven years to come true.

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IMPETUS FOR CHANGE

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Some of the impetus for change came from the Texas Legislature, which had proposed revising the state’s tax code in a way that would affect two-year college funding. State Representative Lamar Acker Zivley of Temple (1913-1973), a staunch supporter of the college during his four terms in office from 1947-1955, noted that the college would

The new Temple Junior College campus was built in 1956 and opened for students in January 1957. (Courtesy of Rose Anne Brasher Special Collections, Temple Collete Libraries)



Gymnasium on the new campus (Courtesy of Rose Anne Brasher Special Collections, Temple College Libraries)

suffer because the school did not have direct local tax support. Its local funds came through the public school system, making it ineligible for expanded state monies as a separate entity.

Heeding the guidance from Representative Zivley and others, Temple leaders realized changes were needed. Among those pushing for change was the Temple Industrial Foundation, a business partnership founded in 1955 to promote local industries and to improve the area's quality of life.

In October 1955, Temple school trustees approved a resolution endorsing the creation of a separate junior college district with taxing authority. Under the proposal, the college's boundaries would be contiguous with the public school boundaries. Plans immediately got underway to ask voters to approve a bond issue to finance the college's

move from the high school grounds and onto its own campus. The bond issue also included a maintenance tax for ongoing support and infrastructure.

The City of Temple had one bonus: The surplus 32 acre-tract once used by McCloskey General Army Hospital during World War II was still unused. The federal government had sold the land, valued at \$18,742, to the City of Temple, which in turn had given it to the college in 1955. If the voters approved the bond issue and new college district, the land would be available. The city and the school system had to use it or lose it – it would revert back to the federal government. The land was there, ready to be used, hidden in plain sight. All the college needed was community support and money.

Time was of the essence.

MASSIVE SALES JOB

The Ex-Students Association took on the massive sales job to persuade voters that the bond issue was good for students and the community. Alumni personally visited voters throughout the district, speaking to civic organizations, education groups and women's clubs to explain the benefits of a separate campus and to assuage any doubts about creating tax burdens. Shortly after New Year's in 1956, the Bell County Commissioners approved the plan for a separate college district.

In late January 1956, even the weather cooperated with a chilled but sunny 55 degrees. By a six-to-one margin, voters overwhelmingly approved a \$300,000 bond issue to build a new campus on the surplus McCloskey land acquired in 1942 and relinquished by the federal government in 1946. Voters also approved a yearly maintenance tax. The cost to property owners was small: The \$300,000 bond issue included a 13-cent tax, 7 cents for maintenance and 6 cents for debt retirement.

The successful bond issue solved three major problems: making use of unused federal land in peril of being forfeited, reducing the overcrowding at Temple High School, and funding Temple Junior College's new campus and buildings while providing for yearly funding and maintenance.

With the funding assured, the community gathered on May 8, 1956, for a groundbreaking

THE NEW CAMPUS

At first, few people were impressed with the proposed site of the new Temple Junior College campus in south Temple.

One wag called it “an isolated mud hole on the outskirts of Temple.”

A faculty member described the site as “way down there” and “too far to drive.”

The new campus was located on an undeveloped region of South First Street, then a modest two-lane blacktop that quickly morphed into State Highway 36 south to Cameron in Milam County. Flanking the area were fields of cotton, sorghum and corn.

Although construction of Loop 363 began in 1965, it would not be completed to the campus for another decade and would not encircle the city for nearly three decades. Scott & White Memorial Hospital and Clinic were still located downtown along West Avenue G. A motorist would notice only a few dozen houses dotted along the landscape below Avenue M. Shopping was centered in the downtown commercial center. Malls would not appear for another 30 years.

Built on acreage formerly owned by the federal government for McCloskey General Army Hospital during World War II, the land contained a smattering of wood-frame and tar-papered buildings used for maintenance sheds and dormitories for German prisoners



Science laboratories on the new campus (Courtesy of Rose Anne Brasher Special Collections, Temple College Libraries).

of war sent from Camp Hood to be landscapers and maintenance workers on the McCloskey grounds.

College officials considered renovating the existing maintenance buildings for classroom space. However, the 13-year-old hastily constructed shops and sheds were deemed too fragile and inadequate to safely house students and faculty, and upgrades needed to create classroom spaces would be too expensive.

Planners instead decided to build new masonry-and-steel structures large enough to handle 2,000 students, an ambitious goal since enrollment at the time was less than 400.

The new campus was the first of the major postwar construction projects for Temple and Bell County. The next massive construction – creation of the new South 31st Street site for Scott & White Memorial Hospital and Clinic – would not begin for seven more years.

Here was the new campus by the numbers:

- 31,000 square feet of floor space available for immediate use
- 21 acres of land with the remaining 12 acres deeded to the college in 1960
- \$8.01 per square foot in construction costs
- 7 classrooms, each accommodating up to 25 students

- 4 larger classrooms comfortably seating up to 50 students
- 2 science laboratories for chemistry, physics, biology, microbiology, anatomy and physiology, large enough to accommodate up to 32 students.
- 2,800 square feet of reading room space in the library
- 4,400 volumes in the library with available shelving for 9,000 books.
- 11,264-foot gymnasium with bleachers to seat 600 and floor space for 1,200 chairs
- 728-square-foot stage in the gymnasium
- 875-square-foot Student Union Center, 875-square-foot enclosable patio, and a 340-square-foot snack bar
- Administrative offices for the president, deans and registrar. The fireproof vault housed student records.



RETURNING THE FAVOR

Among the biggest promoters of Temple Junior College in the 1950s was William John Valigura (1923-2006).

After graduating in 1941 from Temple High School, his education was interrupted by World War II. He served in U.S. Air Force, where he was shot down over Germany in 1944 and held as a prisoner of war for 13 months. He received numerous medals for his service, including the Bronze Star Medal, the Purple Heart, the Prisoner of War Medal, the Air Force Good Conduct Medal, the American Campaign Medal, the Euro-African Middle Eastern Campaign Medal, and the World War II Victory Medal.

After the war, Mr. Valigura knew he had to restart his life. He enrolled in Temple Junior College in fall 1946 – the same year the Ex-Students Association was formed. Over the next decade, the association developed a strong esprit de corps by hosting annual homecomings and other activities to support and promote the college.

Plunging into academic and extracurricular life he had missed during his military service, Mr. Valigura earned an associate degree in 1947 and later completed higher degrees at Baylor University. Returning to Temple, he became a teacher. The college had helped him re-adjust to civilian life; he returned the favor by being part of the alumni team that personally visited Temple voters in 1955 and 1956 to explain the benefits of a separate college campus. He went on to become



VALIGURA, BILLY
President of Historical Society, Vice-President of Sophomore Class, Treasurer of Luncheon Club, Chorus, Golf Club, Quartet, "Templar" Staff

William John Valigura, pictured here in the 1947 *Templar*, went on to become superintendent of the Temple public schools.

president of the Ex-Students Association in 1957.

When the new campus was formally dedicated on April 27, 1957, Mr. Valigura was among the alumni who were front and center during the festivities. Their work had paid off handsomely.

Later on, Mr. Valigura rose through the ranks to become a Temple public school administrator and eventually Temple Independent School District superintendent.

ceremony on the former McCloskey hospital grounds at 2600 South First Street.

That fall, *Leopard Tales*, the college newspaper, reported, "In all, Temple Junior College is not only enjoying its most hopeful year in history toward entering the new college building but also the largest enrollment on record."

MOVING DAY

Finally, by Christmas break 1956, after long months of watching the new campus slowly taking shape along South First Street, everyone pitched in to pack up and stack boxes for transport so that classes could begin as usual in January on the new campus. Local businessmen joined faculty and staff to move boxes and equipment. Faculty enlisted students to help pack up fragile materials and move them by hand. Of special interest were a large number



Snack bar on the new campus (Courtesy of Rose Anne Brasher Special Collections, Temple College Libraries)

THE FIRST LIBRARIAN

From the time it opened, the Hubert M. Dawson Library was the heart and soul of the campus – a place for gathering, study and exploration, all under the watchful eye of Rose Anne Brasher (1933-2019). Ms. Brasher served as head librarian for nearly 40 years.

Hubert Dawson had hired her in 1956, when the college was still located in the high school basement. She was responsible for creating a first-class college library that was not merely an extension of the high school's facility. When the college moved to its new location in 1956, the library had 4,000 volumes. When Brasher retired, that number was up to 50,000.

When Ms. Brasher started, the role of librarian had not changed much in a century. Library staff kept shelves chockablock with carefully numbered volumes as students prowled rows of shelves. To find a book, they all walked their fingers through packed file cases of card catalogues.

By the time she retired in 1995, she was proud that she had helped the library adopt new technology as it became available. Among her accomplishments was acquiring newspapers and periodicals on CD-ROMs that could be read by computer terminals. "I thought that was something really good," she said with a chuckle. "Of course, after I left, the Internet came along, and we didn't need the CDs anymore."

Even after her retirement from the college, she remained in contact with college personnel, including the library staff. The library archives room was dedicated and named in her honor. Included in the archives were stacks of yearbooks going back to the college's beginning through 1982.

Ms. Brasher remained concerned about the college's treasure trove of archival materials dating back to 1926. During her tenure, Ms. Brasher made an effort to obtain every edition of the *Templar* yearbook for the college's archives to preserve history and the thousands of people who had been involved in the school from the beginning.

She also spearheaded and financially supported digitization of the *Templar*, as well as the other student publication, the *Leopard Tales* newspaper. They were digitized under the aegis of the University of North Texas' Portal to Texas History and became available for free to anyone with an Internet connection. Ms. Brasher didn't hesitate to donate funds to complete the project. "I was so proud of what the library is doing. I knew those yearbooks and papers should be preserved. I was all in favor of it," she said.

She also supported students by endowing student scholarships. Her scholarship is named for her aunt, Rose Brasher Lindley, who always encouraged others to go to college. "Aunt Rose helped me through



Rose Anne Brasher (Courtesy of Rose Anne Brasher Special Collections, Temple College Libraries)

college," Ms. Brasher said. "I try to do the same for my nieces and nephews."

When she died, her memorial service was held in the college library – the place where she always felt at home.



Student studying in the library (1971 *Templar*)

of high school seniors from surrounding districts who were visiting the campus and considering enrollment after graduation.

Meanwhile, on the new campus, custodial staff cleared construction dust while teachers readied their rooms. The student center was festooned with fresh flowers – gifts from townspeople – and the snack bar was fully operational. The City of Temple began resurfacing and extending street lights along South First Street’s two-lane black top, stretching from the former McCloskey Hospital’s main gate at Avenue R down to the college’s entrance.

As they worked and explored the new surroundings, faculty related bittersweet memories of their years in the Temple High School basement. If there was a theme to their recollections, it would be the refrain from the old gospel song, “Ain’t gonna need this house no longer,” the *Leopard Tales* reported.

Psychology professor Albert Bryant Berry (1905-1993) was pleased to see the new faculty lounge was an improvement over the former faculty lounge, located in Temple High’s boiler room. Mr. Berry first attended Temple High in 1917 as a sixth grader and went on to graduate. He later returned as a faculty member, first at the high school then the college.

Although the former Temple High building had been so much a part of his life, “I will leave the old stomping grounds with no

regret or sorrow,” he said. “When I shake the chalk dust from my hair (my hair is not grey; that is just the accumulation of 39 years of classroom chalk dust), it will be with pleasant memories of a good past and an excited expectancy for a better future.”

Gracie Watson (1906–1974), a business administration professor, was delighted with her new quarters and nearly \$2,500 in new equipment for her data processing students.

Dr. Anne Penney Newton, a biology professor, engaged a team of students to help dismantle the biology laboratory and load the trunk of her car. Little did she realize that mischievous students had tied the life-sized skeleton model to her trunk lid so it peeked out with its ghoulish grin. She laughed as she recalled later what passers-by wondered as she drove down South First Street to her new classroom.

By early morning on January 2, 1957, the move was completed. Dean Hubert M. Dawson held a brief devotional in the gymnasium and oriented students with the new facilities. All classrooms and labs were ready.

Mr. Dawson admitted nostalgia for the high school’s tradition and spirit but welcomed “the challenge of a new home, a new life and greater expectation.” Oscar Cornelius “O.C.” Wilks (1894-1963), social science professor, admitted his teaching career had placed him “in almost every room in the old building” and the prospect of

moving to the new campus was a dream come true. Daniel Hugh McCall (1887-1975), physics and chemistry professor, looked forward to expanding the science curriculum. “We will be glad to get to the new building where we will have an opportunity to increase the efficiency of the science department and try to make the courses more interesting to the students,” he said.

The only disgruntled person was Gus Calhoun (1901-1987), newly hired building superintendent. The sparsely landscaped grounds and unpaved parking lots created a preponderance of dust and dirt being tracked inside every day.

“This building is very nice. I’m trying to keep it clean, but this mud is sort of disagreeable,” he said.

DEDICATION CEREMONY

The formal opening of the new campus took place on April 27, 1957, and was a source of delight for students, faculty and administrators.

Temple Independent School District trustee Joe Everton personally welcomed the estimated 300 who gathered. Mr. Everton emphasized that the college’s big day was the result of many working together for the common good of the college. “To the living and dead who worked to make this dream come true and to the students who will take advantage of it – we dedicate this building,” he told the assembly.

The day was filled with speeches, tours, music, barbecue and more speeches. The only minor drawback for the day was that the City of Temple, which had promised to pave parking lots, had not completed the job. Guests parked on the dirt-packed field.

Guest of honor and keynote speaker was Clyde C. Colvert, Ph.D., (1899-1991), dean of the College of Education at The University of Texas at Austin and past president of the American Association of Junior Colleges. A pioneer in junior college education, Dr. Colvert made master plans for many Texas community colleges, including Temple’s. He was responsible for the Community College Leadership Program, established in 1944, the nation’s oldest graduate program with a focus on preparing key community-college leaders. This program would nurture and train many future Temple College administrators.

After the morning festivities and program, students and faculty guided visitors on tours of the new building. That afternoon, there were reunions for the classes of 1927, 1937, 1947 and 1957.

The college that had been relegated to and squeezed into the high school basement was now standing independently on its own, housed in newly constructed buildings spread out on 21 acres.

A new era had begun.

THE FIRST BOARD

The final act in the separation of the college from the Temple public schools came in April 1959, when the Temple school board voted to divest itself of Temple Junior College. That same month, the college’s first board of trustees (originally called the board of regents) took office. The board was an elite group of businessmen and community leaders, many of whom who had attended the college:

- Hanes H. Brindley, M.D., (1918-1990), board president; Scott & White orthopedic surgeon, served through April 1980.
- Jim D. Bowmer, J.D., (1919-2006), Temple attorney, served through April 1967.
- Samuel Elton “Sam” Carter (1916-1992), rancher and investment banker, served through April 1976.

- Arthur “Butch” Fowler (1917-2002), hospital administrator, served through April 1969.
- Chauncey H. Lewis (1911-1982), investments and banking, served through April 1971.
- Keifer Marshall Jr. (1925-2017), insurance executive, served through April 1976.
- Rowland Vannoy (1916-2002), banker, served through April 1960. He was replaced by Paul Boyd (1913-1998), auto dealer, who served through April 1978.
- Everett Raymond Veirs, M.D., (1908-1998), Scott & White ophthalmologist, served through April 1978.



The first board of trustees as pictured in the 1961 issue of the *Templar*.