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WORLD WAR TWO YEARS

1941 - 1945

For more than two years before I accepted the responsibilities of the president's office, the impact of the war had been felt on the campus of every college in America. It was in September 1940 that President Roosevelt signed the first peace-time draft law in the history of the nation. Although it affected only a few men in the colleges, it was a sharp reminder that war was raging in the world and that America likely could not escape being drawn into its mighty vortex. Before the end of the year Abilene was fast becoming a teeming military center as a thousand men rushed to completion Camp Barkeley, a \$4,500,000 army training center near by. It would soon provide flimsy quarters for tens of thousands of troops.

Meanwhile, patriotic and enthusiastic Hardin-Simmons girls soon found an outlet for their energies in a co-ed knitting club for British war relief and other war work. The ballooning of business that Camp Barkeley brought made it relatively easy for students to find work.

The report of Pearl Harbor that came in the early afternoon of December 7, 1941, was first received by the campus community with a measure of incredulity. That Japan would attack America at any point seemed extremely unlikely and that her crippling blow should reach as far as Pearl Harbor was utterly unbelievable. Less than a week before that fateful day, Aubrey Stephenson, always well informed and aware of every current in the ocean of world affairs, had said to a class that Japan would not dare attack us. Her leaders knew at least a little about our might to retaliate and they knew well their own weakness. How could they endure bombing raids with their papier-maché cities? In the first reports, a newsman of a na-

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tional network suggested that the attack likely was the work of irresponsible Japanese militarists and was not sanctioned by the Japanese government.

But a few minutes by our radios convinced us that the attack was deliberate, was well planned and executed, and had behind it the might of Japan. It was not until many months later, however, that the American people were told of the full results of the impact which left the United States a third rate power in the Pacific. On Monday morning, December 8, I took a class in American history to a room in Science Hall equipped with radio, and we had, as it were, a box seat before the stage of history listening to the proceedings in Congress that brought a declaration of war within an hour.

For two years Hardin-Simmons University had been making a substantial contribution to the defense effort of the nation in the form of civilian flying classes. In Abilene and vicinity the beginning of the war in Europe in the fall of 1939 had stimulated great interest in aviation, and soon we secured a license from the Civil Aeronautics Authority and began offering ground training for civilian pilots. The university bought an airplane and aviation companies provided training in the air. Some two hundred persons were licensed through this program, and the army and navy air forces drew heavily on this personnel, even before Pearl Harbor.

Men began to withdraw from school in numbers to join the colors. The faculty voted to allow full credit for courses being passed at the time of withdrawal. I think of Norman Shaffer who left for the Naval Air Corps; and already in service were such men as Connell Taylor, J. B. Heard, Calvin Adams, David Hull, Robert G. Cooke — but I cannot name them all. To some readers they may be just names; but to those of us who knew them they are buoyant, enthusiastic, delightful young men. Some of them seemed so young. Perhaps my being older and the father of a son soon to be overseas caused me to accentuate my

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thoughts of their youth. Just to name one, who left college later during the war, I think of Bill Foley, who seemed more like a high school sophomore than a college student. When I heard of him a few months later, he was tail gunner in a bomber, making runs amidst enemy flak.

And there was Ted Hull, light-hearted, lovable Ted, who had played the part of a dead man in a student stage production and so pitifully soon thereafter met death courageously as a pilot in a fighter plane. Even in the tension and excitement of war, Ted never forgot his alma mater. In a verbal will to a companion, made some weeks before his death, he directed that his war mementos be sent to Hardin-Simmons.

Soon gold stars spangled the service flag. James Leon Bartlett was killed in action in or near Manila; J. E. Pietsche was killed in battle; Leonce Stevenson lost his life while training for combat. Every one named accentuates the omission of more than two score not named. The service flag grew to nearly 1,400 names, and the *Bronco* of 1946 carried the pictures of fifty-one men who did not return from service and the name of one whose picture was not to be had. Probably there were others.

Hardin-Simmons men served on every front, and women in numbers joined the armed forces. It is said that Dorthea Campbell was the first Hardin-Simmons woman to join the WAVES. Molly Elizabeth (Betty) McCombs was a captain in the WACS, when her husband, Captain G. L. (Lawrence) Christian, serving with the engineers was killed in the South Pacific. C. M. Johnson, of Dallas, veteran of World War I, a former president of the alumni association, enlisted and commanded an ordnance battalion that helped to keep the army going from North Africa through Italy. Several Hardin-Simmons men were in that organization, among them Henry Hart, Wayne Burnam, son of Professor and Mrs. J. E. Burnam, and Rupert Richardson, Jr. Walter Jennings, fighting his second war endured the agonies of Anzio Beachhead; Chaplain W. C. Taggart, Jr. in *My*

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Fighting Congregation, recounts his experiences in saving a battalion from capture by the Japanese in the South Pacific. Gib Sandefer, with the Red Cross, in passing through the Mediterranean got combat experience in a hurry from bombing and strafing Luftwaffe. In India he talked his way into a conference with Mahatma Ghandi and got approval of a plan for scholarships for East Indian students in Hardin-Simmons University. William T. Cherry, freshman class president in the 1930's, had an epic experience in the South Pacific. Because of defective instruments, he missed the island toward which he was aiming and was forced to set his bomber down in the ocean. Passengers (among whom was famed World War I flyer, Eddie Rickenbacker) and crew took to life rafts and drifted for days before they were rescued.

There were times when the memories of campus days were rich treasures for these far-flung men and women. From the South Pacific Kenneth Whitescarver wrote with nostalgia and deep feeling:

We could lean back and probe the depth of our minds, recalling memories to last the livelong day You don't come back, you are scattered like milkweed Only the leaves come back, but in the dark night sometimes the breeze comes whipping back off the 40 acres, with the white flag poles; the cannon with its lovers looms up and the rich red wine runs hot within you again and you are drunk with the remembrance of it all.

Two Hardin-Simmons alumni must be included in even a short list of outstanding industrial leaders who promoted the war effort. As President of Standard Oil of New Jersey, the foremost oil company of the world, Eugene Holman of the class of 1916 made a vital contribution to the strength of the nation by conserving oil and stepping up production of oil in the free world. At the same time, John Leland Atwood, of the class of 1926, was heading North American Aviation, Inc., and helping

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to strengthen that arm of the nation's war might.

The war changed things greatly on the campus. Enrollment dropped by about a fourth, and women were much in evidence. After the 1942 season, football was discontinued and the Cowboy Band disbanded before the end of the academic year. Basketball was left, and baseball and track continued for awhile. Minor sports were carried on and most organizations continued to function with a measure of enthusiasm. The "Riding Academy," set up on the northeast corner of the campus, proved to be most popular. Trustee Clarence Cowden was enthusiastic about it, and for awhile Ed Hampton took over the general management. Hampton's main duties were with university investments but his management of riding added to him the title "Dean of Horses." Such all-university functions, as the Hallowe'en reception and crowning the queen continued undiminished, except for the number of those taking part. And, lest the campus should grow dull, there were skating parties and "fun-nites." "Don't let the lack of football destroy college spirit," ran an editorial. Although reduced in numbers, students saw to it that "pep" was not diminished.

Like their elders, students generally took the inconveniences and regimentation of war in stride. For instance, on May 9, 1942, 535 students registered for ration books, and those who ate at the cafeteria took their books to the manager and left them there. There was no confusion and nobody complained.

Some changes that the war brought were incongruous. Only sections A and E of Ferguson Hall were open to single men in 1943-44, the remainder of the hall being used by married couples. Since there was so much better decorum in the sections where the couples lived (some of the husbands being preachers), it was said that the hall belonged to the "Holy endeavors" and the "Sinners." In the fall of 1944, Ferguson was taken over by the girls, one section or more being used by student nurses.

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In response to the appeal of regional agricultural forces, classes were dismissed one November day in 1944 in order that students and teachers might help save a huge cotton crop. A representative number of people reported to the fields, literally white unto harvest that day, but the results of their labors did not greatly change the agricultural situation generally or locally. In passing, I may say that I have picked a considerable amount of cotton, but that was the first and the last time that I ever pulled cotton.

Since housing facilities in Abilene were so distressingly inadequate, the university permitted Smith and Cowden-Paxton Halls to be used by the families of Camp Barkeley and Abilene Army Air Base personnel.

In the summer of 1944 the Brooklyn Dodgers, a football team, trained on the campus, using Cowden-Paxton as their dormitory. For a part of one year early in the war the university secured a contingent of some fifty navy men who were given special training, but thereafter all efforts at securing a special contingent of troops for academic training failed. We did, however, take advantage of the government's plan for paying tuition for persons taking special defense courses in universities and several of these courses in science, mathematics, and business were offered each semester.

After the initial shock received in the early years of the war, enrollment improved. Students for the fall semester, 1943, numbered 564; for the same semester of the following year the number was 630. In the fall of 1944 the number of students was increased by some two score, when a working plan with Hendrick Memorial Hospital was agreed upon whereby student nurses, on their way to becoming registered nurses, might attain junior standing in the university.

The war reached teachers as well as students. By June 1944, sixteen members of the faculty and staff representing from one

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fourth to one third of the total had been lost to the armed forces. Several of these were not replaced; teachers who remained took over their work. In most cases the readjustment was easy to make. In fact, looking back on the war years with the perspective of some three decades, they stand out as an era of innumerable problems that proved surprisingly easy to solve. Almost everyday brought changes that had to be reckoned with. Everybody understood that arrangements were tentative only, that tomorrow, next week, or at longest next month would see change again. Faculty, students, trustees, patrons, friends, and the public generally were cooperative and helpful. J. D. Sandefer, Jr., President of the board, was long suffering and always ready to help in the solution of any problem when he was needed.

A delightful feature of World War II days is that the dark clouds of financial worries that had lowered over the institution nearly all of the time since World War I, dissipated for a period; the university paid off the last of its debts and was able to pay in full the salaries of teachers. Along with this improvement came the removal of the star in the reports of the Southern Association, indicating that Hardin-Simmons was in complete accord with the standards of the Association. Dr. White was able to raise salaries a little before the war froze the schedule.

The president's report for 1945 showed that there was no indebtedness against the university, that endowment funds and properties were carried at a book value of \$1,250,000 which earned the year preceding \$63,413.38, a return of slightly more than five percent. The success of this fund had been made possible by the tireless efforts of the executive committee of the trustees which served also as the university finance committee: C. M. Caldwell, George S. Anderson, J. C. Hunter, W. P. Wright, O. D. Dillingham, T. T. Harris, Thomas E. Roberts, John Alvis, and J. D. Sandefer, Jr. For periods Mr.

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Sandefer, Mr. Hunter and Mr. Wright served in turn as president of the board of trustees and thus were called on to bear many responsibilities in that connection. At this time the Baptist General Convention of Texas also began to give aid to the colleges. In 1943-44 \$10,000 was given; during the following year this amount was doubled; and soon the convention was paying a substantial part of the tuition of preacher students.

So, with reduced enrollment, reduced faculty, but little intercollegiate athletics, and with a finance committee that made almost every dollar of the endowment earn interest all the time, the problems of finance became relatively simple.

The committee assigned the task of finding a successor to Dr. White consisted of Raymond Foy, J. D. (Jake) Sandefer, C. M. Caldwell, George S. Anderson, O. D. Dillingham, Thomas E. Roberts, and C. R. Simmons. They were eager, able and experienced, and no more loyal men ever served a university. They held meetings, set up sub-committees, and worked generally by the best rules of procedure in such matters. They insisted that they had confidence in the *ad interim* administration and were going to take their time in securing a president. Such a policy is wise within certain limits, but any institution is handicapped without a president on a continuing basis. Its friends grow impatient, and there is danger that the trustees themselves may suddenly catch the spirit of protest at delay and change an extremely conservative course into a rash one. I was exceedingly happy, therefore, when the committee agreed upon William Sims Allen, President of John B. Stetson University, the Baptist college of Florida. He visited the campus and after a few days deliberation wired that he would accept the place if elected. The Floridians were loathe to part with him, however, and insisted that he was morally committed to continue there at least a little longer. Hence he reversed his position and asked that he not be elected.

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As 1945 opened, the committee apparently quit looking. From time to time one or more of them talked with me, stating that they favored my election unanimously, if I would assent to take the post. I became convinced that the members of the committee with one accord wanted me to be president and that apparently they represented quite accurately the sentiment of the board. For nearly two years they had tried hard to fill the post, and I had worked with them without success. Things seemed to have come to a point where I must either accept the position or refuse it positively and finally, then opening the way for some decision that might bring irreparable damage. I agreed to take the presidency if every member of the board favored my election and if they would accept my program for the years immediately ahead. We went over the points of my program informally, I wrote them out, and they were recorded in the minutes of the executive committee and ratified by the trustees. The main feature that I called for was a pledge to dissolve the differences that had arisen about the details of the building program and to proceed with the program. On March 19, 1945, I became president of the university on a continuing basis.

It was my good fortune that President White's Secretary was Mrs. Madge Moore Landers (Mrs. Joe Grba) who had been secretary to Presidents Sandefer and White for a decade and a half and knew the minutia of the president's office better than the president knew it. We had worked together for years when I was vice president and acting president and it was gratifying that we were able to continue our work together. I am profoundly grateful for her loyal interest in her work and in the university. She could write a letter that sounded more like me than if I had dictated it. Her efficiency and tireless efforts lightened appreciably the load of the presidency.