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Prexy

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PREXY

(The following editorial appeared in the Pittsburg Headlight of October 30, the next day after the death of President Brandenburg.)

There are residents of Pittsburg, maybe not many but a few, who recall the William A. Brandenburg who came to Pittsburg in the summer of 1913. He was comparatively a young man, just a few years past 40. The state board of administration, then in charge of the state's big schools, had discovered him in the superintendency of the public schools of Oklahoma City. Attention had been attracted to him by distinguished work there. The announcement of his election to be the first president of the College, at that time officially known as the State Manual Training Normal, was unheralded. The Oklahoma city educator, whose previous educational work had been in Iowa, gave the impression of youthful enthusiasm as he looked over the little school housed in two buildings at the southern edge of Pittsburg. He had seen in the school not the meagre equipment it had, nor the small faculty and student body. He might have been interested in the history of its founding and the story of its fight for survival against odds. But it was obvious to those to whom he talked that what the new administrator saw was a large institution in the future. On that summer now nearly three decades in the past, the newcomer must have dreamed of a great achievement in education that would in large measure be his handiwork as an executive.

Mr. Brandenburg, in the full vigor of health, seemed to be filled with quiet confidence. He was dignified but not distant. There was nothing in his demeanor to indicate that he believed himself superior to the task ahead of him. But there was nothing to suggest any lack of faith in his ability to do the job. He had come from a large and booming city to one much smaller. But no one from his conversation would have known it. He took charge

without pomp or ceremony, but he took charge. He appeared to expect the cooperation of the old members of the faculty, men and women who had been through the struggle. He was not disappointed. Nor were the members of the faculty disappointed in him. They had been given a leader. But he was a leader who worked with them. Under such circumstances and in such surroundings, the administration of William A. Brandenburg as president of the institution took over.

A few weeks ago the same William A. Brandenburg, then nearing 71 years of age, looked up from his desk in the familiar office in Russ Hall, at pictures and objects that he had appeared to study while his mind busied itself with vital problems of the College. He was going away, on the advice of his doctor. In the office were faithful assistants. Calmly and with characteristic attention to detail, he had discussed with them matters of operation of the school while he was to be gone. Finally, with everything talked over, with instructions about various details of administration, he rose, took his hat, gave a glance at the office, said good-by to those present and left. Soon he was on his way to a distant city where he was to receive treatment.

It is not unreasonable to suppose that as he glanced over the campus, with its dozen fine buildings, he was thinking of the nearly one and one-half hundred members of the faculty and of the large student body and beyond that student body, of the thousands of men and women who had passed through the institution since he assumed the presidency in 1913. It is entirely reasonable to believe that although he may have said nothing to anyone, he was thinking deeply as he had his last look at the campus, because he knew that his ailment might be fatal and that he might never view the familiar scenes again.

In the more than 27 years of his presidency, the College had almost continuously advanced in student

body, faculty and facilities and in importance in the educational world. Only in two periods, when war and depression interfered, was there failure to go ahead. And the experience of the College was common to the experience of practically all other institutions. President Brandenburg was the last man to take for himself any credit for the monumental achievement that is the College. He always spoke of the loyalty and devotion of the men and women on the faculty. He always gave credit to the hundreds of friends of the institution in the legislature and to the men in the governor's office and to school men and women throughout the state for the advancement of the College. But he was the head of the institution. He was the executive in charge. He formulated the program. He devised the course of action. He administered both the business affairs of the College and the government of the College. He directed the instructors, the professors and their assistants. And the results stand out as proof of his wisdom, courage and farsightedness.

President Brandenburg was an executive who seldom lost his temper and never lost control of himself. Facing trying problems, he met them with a determination that matched his ability and with a superb calmness. He never was carried away either by his own enthusiasm or by the enthusiasm of others. He acted with deliberation but without delay. Honors in the educational field came to him continuously. But he retained that humility and modesty throughout his career that endeared him to his associates. The successful presidency of a great school requires executive ability of a high order. President Brandenburg possessed this ability. He was diplomatic but in administering his office he was definite in his decisions. There never was any doubt about his appreciation of his responsibilities. He had his critics. He was never confounded by them. He never

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permitted those who found fault to swerve him from the course he had set for himself and for his institution. And he was never afraid to fight when fighting was necessary.

Pittsburg and Kansas were well acquainted with him as a citizen as well as an educational administrator. President Brandenburg long ranked as one of the ablest platform speakers in the state. He was in great demand for all sorts of occasions. He believed that he had a responsibility as a citizen to a state he served in an official capacity. He believed that he had a part to play as a citizen of Pittsburg. The long list of places he occupied in civic affairs, both in state organizations and in community organizations, bears eloquent testimony to his readiness to be helpful as a citizen. Whether the job was large or small, whether it involved recognition and prominence such as presiding over some gathering or directing some campaign or menial tasks of civic workers, such as soliciting funds in small amounts or studying some industrial problem, he was always willing to do his part.

President Brandenburg was democratic to the fullest extent. He was approachable beyond the necessities of one in so important a position. His friends were not confined to his associates at the College or here in Pittsburg civic affairs or in the state organizations where he was long an important figure. He had been compelled to work hard in his boyhood on an Iowa farm. The going had not always been easy for him in his manhood. His sympathies were always for those whose luck was bad. Year after year he did everything in his power to provide assistance for young men and women who wanted to attend college but whose resources were prohibitive.

On the platform, President Brandenburg was as fearless as he was eloquent. For one who made as many public addresses as he was called upon to make, on all sorts of occasions, he maintained a refreshing viewpoint and an independent line of thinking. Upon occasions, he rose to heights in thought and expression. Not many Kansans of his day, Kansans of the last quarter of a century, have been able to impress audiences more effectively when he chose to do so. He had a wonderful sense of humor, too. His ability to turn from the serious to the funny and to mingle them in his discussions gave him additional power of expression.

As president of the College, President Brandenburg found it necessary to spend much time with legislators because the legislature made appropriations for the maintenance of the

College. All other heads of state educational institutions devote much time to legislators. Hundreds of men who have been members of the Kansas legislature became friends of President Brandenburg through meeting him at Topeka when he was pleading the cause of necessary funds for the College. He had a habit of knowing his subject completely when he appeared before a legislative committee. At Topeka he was not boresome to legislators. He never wore them out. He did not make himself obnoxious around the legislative halls. When he arrived in Topeka on a particular mission, he remained at his hotel until he was called before the committee. As a result of this sort of thing, legislators hunted him up and wanted to visit with him. That was a particularly happy state of affairs for an institution head out seeking the help of the legislators.

President Brandenburg was generous to those who had no right to expect generosity from him. He had enemies that he had made in fighting for the things he believed right and just. That he was almost completely lacking in vindictiveness or desire for revenge was shown many times in his treatment of persons who were not loyal to him as an executive. Incident after incident provides proof that he disregarded his own personal feelings when he believed that giving force to them might be injurious to the institution.

The death of President Brandenburg brings poignant pain and grief to thousands of personal friends. As many of his acquaintances in Pittsburg said yesterday, Pittsburg, the community, has suffered a tremendous loss in the passing of President Brandenburg.