INAUGURATION OF PRESIDENT BILLY M. JONES

Memphis State University
May 11, 1974
The Presidential Medallion

Memphis State University's first inauguration initiates the use of its new ceremonial Presidential Medallion and chain. The Presidential Medallion and chain are symbols of the authority vested in the Office of the President by the board of regents of the State University and Community College System of Tennessee. Only the Memphis State University president may wear it, and, following the inauguration ceremony, it becomes a part of official presidential functions at the University.

In effect, Memphis State University is assuming a tradition begun in ancient Rome and carried into the religious and academic world of the Renaissance, where chains of office and symbols, or medallions, were used in their symbolism. In keeping with academic tradition, Memphis State University's medallion, or chain, is known as the Presidential Medallion. It combines the school seal with a chain that honors the past presidents of the University.

The medallion is a duplicate of the school seal, 4 3/8 inches in diameter, and has a base metal of sterling silver. It is trimmed in 14-karat yellow gold.

The front is hard enamel that matches the school colors of blue and gray. It contains three symbols—the open book of scholarship, the hunt-held torch of knowledge and a river streamboat that symbolizes Memphis. All are rated to 14-karat gold and trimmed in blue enamel with a gray enamel background. A precious stone is mounted in the wheel of the steamboat.

The reverse side is engraved in silver with presentation and inauguration information.

The front of the decorative chains commemorates past presidents of Memphis State University. The back contains engraved names of each president's term of office.

Each link of the chain has a sterling silver bar with 14-karat yellow gold trim. Within the trim is blue enamel surrounding a silver plate, engraved with the name of a past president. A new link will be added at each future inauguration.

The reverse side of each link is engraved with the term of office of each president represented on the front.

The medallion, which now becomes a part of University tradition, was designed by Tom B. Collins, Memphis State University director of art services.

The Presidential Medallion and chain were produced by Memphis Jewellers, Inc., and the gold plate engraved to incorporate fine jewelry. The medallion and chain are a gift to the University by a distinguished, select number of alumni and friends.
"I believe a president must be a generalist who is supported by several specialists. Specialists who help him understand ... and interpret ... It's in the area of translating the role and scope of the university, and seeing that all components strive harmoniously toward the fullest realization of that role and scope, that I feel is the chief obligation of a university president. I am delighted that such a responsibility is mine at Memphis State University."

—President Billy M. Jones
Dr. Billy M. Jones was appointed the eighth president of Memphis State University by the board of regents of the Tennessee University and Community College System June 30, 1978.

He was recommended to the board by a special Memphis State presidential search committee and, at that time, was president of Southwest Texas State University, San Marcos, Tex. President Jones' academic background reflects his heritage of being a native Texan with Tennessee affiliations. He was born April 8, 1928, at Athletic, Tex., and attended San Angelo (Texas) Junior College, receiving an associate of arts degree in 1949.

From Texas and SJC, he moved to Tennessee and Vanderbilt University, where he received a bachelor of arts degree in business and history in 1960.

Shortly after graduation, he began his career as an instructor of mathematics and head football and basketball coach at Hillbrow High School, Saddle, where he served until 1964. During this period, he received a master's degree in history and education from George Peabody College.

From Hillbrow High, he entered the collegiate realm as a history instructor and assistant football coach at Middle Tennessee State University, Murfreesboro. In 1966, he returned to Texas to coach at Texas S&M University, College Station.

From 1969-69 (except for a two-year period from 1961-69), President Jones served his junior college alma mater as professor and chairman of the history department, director of men's housing, director of curriculum development, and dean of students. From 1961-68, he was a history instructor at Texas Tech University and he received his Ph.D. in history and political science there. He attended the University of Colorado for post-doctoral studies in academic administration.

The 49-year-old administrator is a member of numerous professional, civic, and service organizations, including the Tennessee Historical Association, the National Education Association, Rotary International, Economic Club of Memphis, Future Memphis, Inc., and is chairman of the National HTOC Advisory Panel. He serves on the executive boards of the Liberty Bowl, Memphis Area Chamber of Commerce, Memphis Community Television Foundation (WEMS-TV) and Memphis School of Banking.

He has been the recipient of several awards and honors, including the Piper Professor of 1967 (a $1,000 award for an outstanding teacher) in Texas colleges and universities and is a fellow of the Texas State Historical Association and the American Council on Education. He has listed in "Who's Who in America," the "Directory of American Scholars," and "Contemporary Authors." President Jones has written extensively on various aspects of Texas history, and is the author of two books, "Health Seekers in the Southwest, 1877-1900" and "Search for Maturity: Signs of Texas, 1878-1900," and co-author of "Texians All: The People of Texas."
The Future — Ideas and Innovations

1. When you arrive at Memphis State several months ago, you stated that your first step would be to involve the community's urgent needs and matching them with the institutional and research resources of the university. We work very closely with the students and the community on their problems and aspirations. It pays a great deal of respect on the university to contribute up to that benefit of performance, but it also gives the university the prerogative of showing industry to help keep its programs productive.

2. During the last two years, the public has heard a great deal about the future of higher education, especially in the area of continuing education. How do you define continuing education? I rather like the idea of what the administration is calling continuing education.

3. Continuing education means simply that an individual learns during his lifetime. True learning cannot take place in the freshman year. The concept requires that the university accept the responsibility of providing educational experiences throughout life which a person can continue to improve socially, culturally or occupationally at a time convenient for him. We're looking to serve age groups that have not been served traditionally in continuing education.

4. How, then, can you suddenly become necessary to expand beyond the traditional four-year academic programs?
The Past Presidents

The first president, Seymour A. Myers, literally carried the school that was to become Memphis State University. From his Kipling, Tenn., roots, Mr. Myers earned his degree from the University of Tennessee in 1910 and thereupon dedicated his life to education. He became a teacher and later supervisor in the school system—a system he thought lacking.

Long before being tapped to the presidency of the old West Tennessee State Normal School in 1917, the man who would follow him into office, John Wilfred Briner, traveled the state of Tennessee in an effort to build support for a state normal school that would establish a system for educating teachers.

At the end of the last war and high button collars of the day, Mr. Myers and Mr. Briner rode wagons and trains from county to county, from school desk to school desk, calling for a system that would give teachers a chance to learn to teach—so better educated teachers could become.

Success followed in 1918 when the Tennessee General Assembly passed the bill to create West Tennessee State Teachers College. That first fall, the school was opened in a one-story frame building, the first of the state's many grand divisions.

In 1939, in a Briner corner of the old mill, the first in what was then the Memphis city limits, a student of the Briner era turned Memphis State University.
The University Today

Groups of numbers usually fail to convey the aesthetic qualities of an institution, but a close look at the statistics that describe Memphis State University provides a sharp contrast. The statistics illustrate the startling changes in modern society and education. In the basic elements breakdown, new interest in graduate programs and continuing education is evident.

In the fall of 1979, the University enrolled 18,000 undergraduate students, 3,000 graduate students, 668 law students and over 1,300 continuing education students. These 21,368 students represent 18% of Tennessee’s 98 counties, 44 states and 48 foreign countries. Student enrollment has thrice doubled in the last five years, up from 6,500 in the fall of 1974. Memphis State has three residences halls, with only 7.7 percent of the student body residing on campus. Another interesting characteristic of today’s student is his average age. Traditionally, college students are 18-22 years-old. The average student age on the Memphis State University campus is 26.2, with 60 percent of the student body over 22 years-old. The percentage of married students has also risen, 21.8 percent are married, of which 17.1 percent are undergraduate students. Men still outnumber women (84 percent men, 16 percent women). Today’s student body also reflects what has been defined as the "vocational subculture," referring to the fact that most — perhaps most of the students are employed while furthering their education. More than 3,000 have on-campus jobs, and many are employed off campus. Various University officials estimate the percentage of working students at 88 percent.

There is no evidence that the career tracks that students pursue after graduation are in any way dissimilar to those pursued by traditional college graduates. Approximately 8,400 students were enrolled last fall in 610 credit courses meeting between 8 a.m. and 10 p.m.

The "vocational subculture" has demanded some changes in the academic program and the University has responded quickly to these new needs, as illustrated by two important changes in policy during the past year. The last day for dropping courses was extended from Friday of the third week to Friday of the fourth week of the fall, spring, and mid-term, enabling students to make curricular changes before starting the second half of the school semesters. The University is also encouraging the use of the "credit by examination" policies as part of the opportunity to receive course credit for previous training, education and experience.

In addition, approximately 30 academic programs have been either consolidated or eliminated in an effort to update the curriculum. New courses and majors are added every year, although the actual number of majors offered has been reduced from 198 to 116 due to curriculum streamlining.

Although still relatively new, the graduate program at Memphis State University is quite extensive. A student may study in 34 departments with various majors and several specialization, and obtain a master's degree through one of these departments. The doctor of philosophy degree is offered through the departments of engineering, art, business, education, nursing, psychology, and business administration. The doctor of education degree is offered by several departments within the College of Education.

The quality of the curriculum improves yearly, as nearly every program area in which accreditation is available has received it. Also, the University participates in studies on various aspects of education.

Program development is a constant emphasis. Currently under study are expansion of the honors program, new program offerings in on-time education and other areas, remedial programs, career planning and leadership development.

Memphis State University is also the people who have chosen education as their profession. The 3,187 members of the faculty and staff include 656 full-time faculty, 296 part-time faculty, and 1,235 professional staff.

The faculty is a diverse mix of full-time students and their interests. The faculty also serves the community, including many of the academic colleges operate research bureaus, whose services are available to industry, service organizations and governmental groups. The Bureau of Business and Economic Research of The College of Business Administration is studying housing problems in Memphis. During the past five months, the Herff College of Engineering’s research bureau has developed a plan for producing fuel from garbage for the City of Memphis.

Memphis is a significant part of Memphis and the Mid-South, both culturally and economically. The campus contributions to the city's cultural life are well known. The many parties, concerts, speeches and special programs contribute to the community's cultural well-being, and athletic events bring the city together.

The University also contributes directly to the economy of Memphis and the area. Students spend an estimated $25 million annually in Memphis, and the bulk of the 4,400 million in operating budget (which includes payroll) is spent locally for supplies, utilities and other materials and services. The economic impact of the 4,400 million physical plant and its 13,100 acres is significant.

Memphis State University today is in more than a few thousand people and several buildings. It is tomorrow’s leaders being educated for tomorrow’s world. It is today’s leaders devoting their care and training to both tomorrow’s leaders and today’s problems.
The first family of Memphis State University resides in the presidential home at 4018 Grandview, a few blocks east of the Memphis State University campus. It is a predominately male family with four cussinistically sports-minded sons.

"We're all great sports fans," explained Mrs. Billy M. Jones, "My sons have played football, basketball and participated in track, and, of course, my husband coached for a number of years."

Mrs. Jones admits that she is a football fan with some tactical game knowledge. "I have to be informed, living with a house full of men," she smiled.

Previous and Mrs. Jones, the former Doris Hudson, were married March 10, 1948. Originally from San Angelo, Texas, Mrs. Jones is a graduate of San Angelo High School and San Angelo Junior College. She met President Jones while both were students at S.A.U.

The Jones' sons, who stand at least 6 feet tall, are Jeff, 23, a pharmacist living in Austin, Texas; Woody, 19, an all-division football student; Rusty, 17, a junior at Harding Academy of Memphis; and Scotty, 14, also a student at Harding.

Memphis State's first family attends the University Church of Christ, where they are quite active in church functions. They like travelling, fishing and golf as family recreational activities, while Mrs. Jones enjoys hiking and an occasional game of bridge with her husband as partner.

With the boys' school activities and President Jones' University obligations, Mrs. Jones admits she encounters some difficulty scheduling meals and often resorts to buffet dinners.

"The boys are ready for dinner at 5 o'clock and my husband never seems to get home at that hour, so we usually eat in shifts," she explained.

Mrs. Jones views her role as first lady as primarily a supportive position. She feels her first responsibility is to lend her husband moral support. "I want to be involved in University activities, but my first responsibility is to be his wife."

The classic, quiet-dwelling woman characterizes her family as active and energetic; however, she believes the boys are somewhat self-conscious about their size as "first" sons.

"We've always told them, 'Be yourself,'" she said, "and I don't think we've pressured them to be anything but average boys. Whether my husband was President or not, I don't think our attitude toward our sons would change."

The Joneses are no strangers to the Mid-South, having lived in Nashville and Murfreesboro. Mrs. Jones says the first family enjoys the advantages of city-living and hasn't needed to make many adjustments since moving.

"San Marcos (where Dr. Jones was president of Southwestern Texas State University) is much smaller than Memphis, but, I think, Tennessee people are a lot like Texas people. I really like living in Memphis, especially the cultural events in the city," she said.
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