



# *I***NTERVIEW with PRESIDENT ELLIS**

*Q. President Ellis, you became President of the University in 1955 after serving a few months as Acting President. Why was no formal inauguration ceremony held for you?*

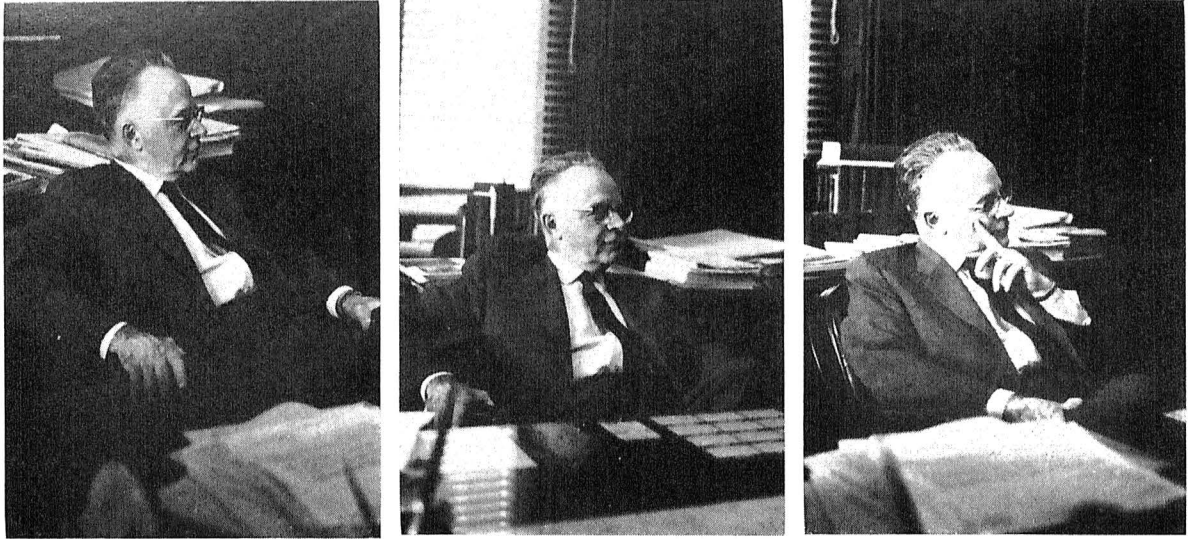
A. It has not been the custom at the University of Missouri for a President who has been appointed from the staff to have a formal inauguration ceremony. No ceremony was held, for instance, for Walter Williams or F. A. Middlebush. In cases where the President is a man virtually unknown in the State, a formal inauguration is highly desirable. Neither the

Board of Curators nor I thought that a formal inauguration was desirable in my case.

*Q. What are some of the ways in which the presidency differs from the deanship which you formerly held?*

A. I suppose the biggest difference is that in the presidency one spends more time in thought on exterior relations of the University with other agencies and groups within and out of the State.

There is also the very important change that one



is required more specifically to think in terms of all programs of the University, because he is responsible for the College of Agriculture, the School of Mines and Metallurgy, and the School of Medicine, for example, to the same degree as to that of the College of Arts and Science.

It makes a difference also in the number of people you see, because one must spend a great deal more time with other administrative officers such as the Deans, the business manager and the comptroller, as well as with members of the State administration and the General Assembly in Jefferson City. One is off the campus a great deal more and sees less of students and faculty than he did in the position of Dean.

*Q. How do you and Mrs. Ellis like living in the President's House?*

A. We like the President's House very much. It is truly a beautiful building with rich historic connections, as it is the oldest building on the campus, going back to 1867. The objectional feature is that it is located on a busy street and in the middle of campus activities, which reduces one's privacy very substantially.

*Q. As President, you are probably called upon to make many speeches. Are you able to comply with all these requests or do you have to refuse some?*

A. No University President can accept a large proportion of the invitations to speak which come to him. I am accepting as many as I can, giving the first preference to the University itself and attempting to

appear before as many state groups to discuss the University as I can. Of course I have to refuse three out of four invitations, many of which I would like very much to accept.

On the other hand, I try to remember what President Donovan of the University of Kentucky said when he retired—if he had his presidency to serve over again he would make fewer and better speeches!

*Q. Does your work entail much travel?*

A. It seems like a great deal to me, both in the State and out of it. I am trying to hold travel to a minimum in accordance with the needs of the University.

*Q. How do faculty salaries at the University compare with salaries at similar Midwest institutions?*

A. We have been at some disadvantage over the years, especially in comparison with the institutions with which we logically are in competition. Somehow most of the older and larger state universities in the Midwest have been able to develop better salary schedules than we have.

This problem could get more serious, because too few people prepare themselves for college teaching. As too many universities bid for the services of too few qualified teachers, the best teachers are likely to gravitate to those institutions having the best salaries. However, we are working at the job, and we are going to move along as fast as we possibly can.

I believe the people of the State will want us to maintain high levels of instruction and research and will make it possible for us to do so. We are somewhat better off this year than we were last.

*Q. Is the University enrollment increasing about as has been expected?*

A. In 1954 we estimated for the General Assembly that our total enrollment at Columbia and Rolla would be about 13,000 in the Fall of 1960. It is almost that high this Fall despite the fact that increases have been limited because of a shortage of dormitory space. The big high school graduating classes which begin next Spring will make that problem worse and will increase the pressure on us tremendously.

*Q. How is the University's building program progressing?*

A. Our building program is in accord with our overall plan. We cannot have too many buildings under

construction without overloading our local labor market. We have three large dormitories under way at Columbia and one at Rolla. By next Spring we will have three classroom buildings underway at Columbia and two at Rolla. Others will come along just as fast as it is economical to schedule them.

*Q. Are we doing anything to develop more parking facilities around the University?*

A. That has been one of our worst worries, and it still is. One factor, narrow streets, makes traffic movement and parking a tremendous problem. Off-street parking is necessary, and as fast as we can we are getting parking lots ready. The University is limited in its resources, and of course the acquisition of new



Photographs by  
Lee Battaglia

space is a slow and costly process. It is almost out of the question to provide enough parking space for visitors when a convention comes here during the regular session.

*Q. As author of two books on "Mr. Dooley," are you still associated with him and his philosophy?*

A. Only recently I was approached by a publisher about doing a new anthology on Mr. Dooley, but I'm afraid there isn't time. Yes, it seems I can never escape what I recall of Mr. Dooley's philosophy, as created by Finley Peter Dunne. Would you like a quotation? Mr. Dooley had been discussing colleges and college students with Mr. Hennessey when he was asked: "If you had a boy would you send him to college?" To which Mr. Dooley replied: "At the age when a boy is fit to be in college I wouldn't have him around the house."

*Q. Are you able to pursue your hobby of collecting certain old books?*

A. Yes, I still add some to my collection of old books on humor, and I also collect old textbooks on American history. I believe I have most of the famous old school history textbooks.

*Q. What would you say is the biggest problem the President of the University has?*

A. One day I think I know the answer to that one, and the next day I do not. I suspect it would be too difficult to try to isolate a single problem as the biggest; you see, one problem usually is related to several others, and it is often impossible to know where one stops and another starts.

One of my biggest problems is that of keeping myself informed about what is going on over all the vast program which the University operates. This, of course, I must try to do; otherwise I cannot meet my obligation to help plan and administer the educational services which will most effectively meet the needs of the citizens of Missouri.

At other times I think the problem centers upon public relations in its widest aspects. Public relations with the faculty, the students, the citizens of the State, with the high schools of the State from which our students come, with the State Government of which we are a part, with the other universities and colleges in the State and nation with whom we cooperate in a common program. In one sense this is the major problem, but there are so many important ones I think it is rather useless to choose one problem and say it is more important than others.

