

On behalf of my family I am glad to accept this honor. Laura and John Beckworth and Paul Hobby all graduated from the law school. I taught at the LBJ School for five years.

But the family member who most deserves this honor is Laura's and Paul's grandfather, Governor Will Hobby, who literally saved the University.

Here's how and why:

Ninety-three years ago Governor James Ferguson tried to close the University of Texas down and was removed from office because he did so. He vetoed the University of Texas appropriation because the regents wouldn't fire the president who wouldn't fire professors the Ferguson didn't like. Ferguson summoned regent George Washington Littlefield and told him he would not veto the appropriation if President Robert E. Vinson resigned. President Vinson asked Littlefield how he should respond. Littlefield said "I would tell him to go to hell!"

Vinson said that the expression was "somewhat out of line with my own customary forms of expression" but asked Littlefield "to convey the substance of his statement to the Governor as my reply, leaving the exact verbiage to (Littlefield's) own discretion".

President Vinson also got divine guidance. Texas Episcopal Bishop George Herbert Kinsolving was closely associated with the University of Texas. As Vinson later told the story: "Just at that moment the ringing of the telephone interrupted the proceedings and the voice of Bishop Kinsolving came to my ears. 'No matter how I know it, but I know what is going on,' he said, 'but don't you resign.' That message had much to do with the decision then made."¹

Ferguson vetoed the appropriation that same afternoon and the University of Texas was in the ditch. But then a remarkable thing happened, probably unique in the history of public education. Two of the regents pledged their fortunes by personally guaranteeing the university's budget of \$1,627,404 (\$30,000,000 today).² Littlefield and George Washington Brackenridge were long-time regents who disliked each other intensely. They had served on opposite sides in the Civil War. They disagreed, often bitterly and personally, about almost everything except the welfare of the University. Both had given enormous amounts of money to the University. Various structures on the UT campus are named for them.

Brackenridge gave the 600-acre tract along the Colorado River. He also gave the City of San Antonio the park that bears his name. Even the park gift ultimately benefitted the University. Brackenridge, a prohibitionist, gave the park with a reverter: If alcohol were ever consumed in the park the property would revert to the University. Of course no alcohol was ever consumed in the park, but the City of San Antonio bought the reverter from UT to a few years ago—just in case.

Technically, Ferguson wasn't impeached because of the veto, but the veto was the real reason. There were plenty of other grounds for impeachment. Ferguson had been indicted for misusing public funds.

Governor "Farmer Jim" Ferguson was also selling pardons. And clemency came with every cow. Then, as now, a lot of people were in prison who need not have been there. Governor Miriam A. "Ma" Ferguson pardoned a lot of people too, including John Ed Patten, Barbara Jordan's maternal grandfather and mentor.

My father appointed a committee to tour the prisons, interview inmates, and recommend pardons. He pardoned 35 men just before Christmas. 1917.

My father didn't sell pardons, but he certainly rewarded deserving inmates:

- **He pardoned George, a murderer, half Negro half Indian, who was one of the prison trustees who worked in the Mansion. George worked for our family the rest of his life. George taught me to shoot and ride. George and I hunted rabbits behind his greyhounds where the Shamrock Hotel used to be and the Texas Medical Center is now.**

- **My father had a friend who gave him sausage every Christmas. When asked where he got such good sausage. the donor said. "I'll get you more sausage, but where I get it is my business." The sausage giver came to see my father and said "Will, I want you to pardon James. I know him well. He's a good man. I'll be responsible for him. He'll have a job with me the rest of his life."**

"Why are so interested in James?", my father asked.

"Will, James makes the sausage." said the friend. James got the pardon. What was it someone said about making laws and sausage? **Better to be a sausage-giver than a law-giver!**

In any case, it wasn't the pardons that really got Ferguson in trouble. It was the veto.

The Legislature reappropriated the money. My father signed the bill and all was well. The University was out of the ditch and the regents were off the hook.

Maybe today's regents should give him a posthumous Santa Rita Award. But I guess that's not likely since about fifty years ago he hired a young television reporter named Kay Bailey.

Bill Hobby

¹Robert E. Vinson, "*University Crosses the Bar*", Volume 43, Number 3, *Southwestern Historical Quarterly Online*,
http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/publications/journals/shq/online/v043/n3/contrib_DIVL4963.html
[Accessed 2/20/07] I am indebted to former UT President Larry Faulkner for guidance and to Professor David B. Gracy II, archivist of the University of Texas, for these citations.
<http://www.allsaints-austin.org/history.htm>
² Ferguson veto message.